Satan Sifting:

OR, THE

OYL of JOY,

For the SPIRIT of

HEAVINESS.

There hath no Temptation taken you but such as is common to Man; but God is faithful; who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. 10. 13.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

Courteous Reader.

ALthough a Book that may be useful in some moderate degree to Mankind, might seem to make its own Apology for being made publick; (and an unprofitable one admits of none to be made for it:) Yet such is the Humour of the Age we live in, so prevailing and Tyrannical its Customs in Publications of this Nature, either per-

haps running out laviſhly in extravagant praiſes of thoſe whoſe Protection and Patronage is requeſted, ſo in a manner expoſing their very Vertues to ſcorn and contempt, while 'tis endeavour'd to illuſtrate them, and the Author ſeems rather to write of, than to ſuch a Perſon; or elſe filling ſo many turgent Pages with idle Impertinencies, and frivolous Excuſes, for too bold an Attempt, in letting ſuch and ſuch Papers, ſo and ſo only (privately) deſigned for the particular Benefit of one or other, (by their Inſtigation alone, whoſe Commands ought not to be diſputed) be expoſed to publick view and cenſure, that a ſmall Treatiſe cannot ſteal out into the World without its Gentleman-Uſher, or may appear as particular as one out of the common faſhion, who is either apt to be deſpiſed, as poor and beggarly, and ſo fain to follow it (like a Servant) at that diſtance; or elſe Proud and Phantaſtical, and therefore pointed at as Foppiſh. Let me then be ſo far in the

Mode

Mode as may be neceſſary to avoid affecta-tion and ſingularity; yet as keeping within the bounds of decency and diſcretion, that I may neither make the Porch, as though for the Houſe to run out thereat, nor abruptly enter into the ſubject matter, as though by violently ruſhing and breaking in upon it, but as by a path-way directly leading thereunto. You may therefore know that the deſign of this ſmall Tract may eaſily enough be thought to be to ſtrengthen the Feeble-minded, and to ſupport the Weak, whom Satan *hath bound, or doth Buffet with Evil Thoughts, or whom the deceitfulneſs of Sin has prevailed mightily againſt; ſhewing the plenteous Redemption of Man by Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous, that died to take away the Sins of the World, the very Paſchal Lamb, our Propitiation and Advocate; as alſo how we are to behave our ſelves, ſo as to come at laſt to inherit the Promiſes of Life and Salvation, opening and enlightning the Eyes of the blind, that they*

they might more clearly ſee it, and more comfortably run with Patience towards the Price of the High Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus, having the Joy ſet always before them; *whom the God of all Conſolation, ſtrengthen, ſtabliſh, ſettle, bruiſing* Satan *under their Feet; and that this may be an helper of their Joy, is the unfeigned Prayer of the Author.*

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Satan

SATAN SIFTING, &c.

A Christian's State in this Life.

1 Cor. X. 13.

There hath no Temptation taken you, but such as is common to Man: But God is Faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

THE Christian Life is a State of War, a continued Act of Hostility. The Church is here below but Militant, in a State of Trial, to overcome and be Triumphant; and all that are initiated therein, are Listed under Christ's Banner, manfully to fight the Lord's Battles, against Sin, the World, and the Devil; which, that we may the better be enabled to do, we should, from our Childhood, be trained up to follow the Captain of our Salvation, and to endure hardness, as good Soldiers of Jesus

Chriſt; that being thus ſpiritually harneſſed, we might not ſtart aſide like a broken Bow; or be ſo ſhaken as to fall from our own ſtedfaſtneſs, making a League with Death, or an Agreement with Hell, inſomuch as a Truce or Ceſſation of Arms; but ſtand upon our Guard, like a Watchman upon a Tower, to obſerve the Enemy's Motions, leſt *Satan* ſhould get an advantage againſt us; for we are not ignorant of his Devices, though he be a ſubtile Adverſary, ſets Traps in our way wherein we ſhould walk, and catches Men by Wiles, and the cunning craftineſs whereby he lies in wait to deceive, if *it be poſſible, the very Elect*; tempting not only to Things abſolutely evil, in themſelves unlawful, and ſo conſequently utterly forbid; but alſo to the abuſe of Things honeſt in the ſight of all Men; whom reſiſt ſtedfaſt in the Faith, and he will flee from you like a Shadow purſued; ſo cowardly and impotent, as well as bold and turbulent; ſo weak his Principality and Powers themſelves, though ſo ruling in his own Dominion of Darkneſs: He can pull down no Strong-Hold, till by our Treacherous ſelves admitted in, but beats a Parley, and Plows with our Heifer. *Caſt thy ſelf down*, ſays he to our Lord in his Temptations: We read of no force that he uſed to throw him down from the Pinnacle of the Temple: He cannot take us by Storm, nor lead us Captive at his Will, unleſs firſt at our own; cannot conquer where bid defiance, and to avoid; for *who hath any ſtrength ſave our God?* Whoſe Enemy he is as much as ours, and whoſe Curſe he lies under; and I wot whom God Curſes is Curſed indeed: And how then ſhould he proſper any more than the Fig-tree that our Lord curſed, which you know immediately withered

withered away? Can the multitude of his Spearmen or Horſes prevail againſt the many thouſand Chariots of the Almighty? What though their Name be *Legion* that come againſt us, if we go forth in the ſtrength of the Lord God? Whether our Eyes are opened to ſee it or not, *they are more* (as the Prophet ſaid to his Servant when compaſſed about) *that are for us, than are for them; for if God be for us, who can be againſt us?* Beſides, the Devil is held as a Priſoner in an *Adamantine* Chain of Darkneſs, unto the Judgment of the great Day; our Lord has alſo bruiſed his Head already for us, and vanquiſhed him: I ſay *for us*; for he was ſufficiently under his Feet before; ſo that we may be more than Conquerors through him that loved us. Wherefore be ſtrong, and he ſhall comfort your Hearts, all ye that put your truſt in the Lord, put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the Wiles of the Devil; for the Serpent was by no means the ſtrongeſt, but more ſubtle than any Beaſt of the Field: And the Devil is ſaid to deceive the whole World in the twelfth of the Revelations.

Now the Armour of God is compleat; and yet 'tis obſerved to be without any Back-piece; ſo that if we flee before the Enemy, we are open and naked, expoſed to the Malice and Rage of the Purſuer.

The Weapons of our Spiritual Warfare are both offenſive and defenſive, that we might be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might, having our Feet ſhod with the Preparation of the Goſpel of Peace, and our Loyns girt about with Truth; having on the Breaſt-plate of righteouſneſs, and the Helmet of Salvation; taking the Sword of the

Spirit, which is the Word of God quick and powerful; and above all, taking the Shield of Faith, as an invincible Shield, wherewith we ſhall be able to quench all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked; for theſe are Temptation-proof; you may eſſay to go with them. And, though good Soldiers may, by their own valour, raſhneſs, or otherwiſe, ſometimes receive ſuch Wounds as do not kill them in the Field, yet they may carry the Scars thereof with them to the Grave: So did St. *Paul*, Chriſt's Champion, bear in his Body the Marks of the Lord Jeſus, as ſo many Scars of Honour; for no Man is out of *Satan*'s Gun-ſhot. Our Lord himſelf was tempted; but being not overcome, it was his Conqueſt, and none but the Devil's Sin. Would we then reflect the Poiſon of the Temptation upon the Tempter? When he tempts to any Evil, we ſhould do the contrary, Good; this would cauſe his Underminings to fall in upon himſelf, this would cauſe his Miſchief to light on his own Head, and we ſhould ever eſcape it; and if any thing would make him weary of his going about thus ſeeking to deſtroy, the being to us but the occaſion of Good, and of our greater Salvation, would ſurely do it; for his Bombs do aim at the wounding us with Sin, whoſe Murdering Pieces are levell'd at our Souls chiefly, which once being wounded his next buſineſs is to try if he can keep us from ſeeking out for Cure: So that Preſumption and Deſpair are the two dangerous Rocks to be wiſely avoided, and always carefully and skilfully ſhunn'd in our paſſage over the Waves of this troubleſome World, leſt we ſplit upon either, making Shipwrack of Faith and a good Conſcience; ſo drowning in Perdition, rendring all the mighty means of

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our Salvation utterly ineffectual, unleſs to the increaſe of our Damnation.

Now although the Devil would by any means have us yield the Fort Royal; yet he knows well enough, that ſo long as a ſtronger than he keeps poſſeſſion, all is in ſafety: Wherefore he turns every Stone, leaves no Artifice untry'd; if roaring after his Prey he cannot take and devour; another while he may ſeek ſlyly to ſet upon it, creeping, as out of Ambuſh. And ſo inveterate is his hatred to Mankind, that this Serpent is Curſedly delighted, (if he can take any pleaſure in any thing,) to affright with hiſſing, where he cannot bite or ſting us. And the very ſight of what is venomous is apt to terrifie and diſcompoſe a timorous Nature, though it be ſecured from all harm; eſpecially, if it be ſuch as we have a ſtrong Antipathy againſt. As our new Nature is very contrary to Sin, and much afraid of its appearance, which indeed, could it be pictured and repreſented in a bodily ſhape, would be the moſt monſtrous and ugly, the moſt odiouſly deformed thing in the World: And, though it be a Bleſſed piece of Cowardice (if ſo to be termed) to flee from Sin, to come not nigh its Dwelling, to be afraid, and ſo paſs by another way, that is well approved and more ſafe; yet there may be thoſe, who, although they put their truſt in God, being nevertheleſs ſometimes apt to be afraid, might well enough admit of the admonithing, to try to fear God ſtill more, and the Devil leſs: Such I mean, whom in the Darkneſs of their Heart *Satan* Buffets, is daily fighting with and troubling, daily in Hand to ſwallow them up, laying wait for their Soul, preſſing down (through their own infirmity) their Life within them, cauſing them to

go mourning all the day long, perſecuting and vexing them with all his Storms, being exceeding mad againſt them; and as St. *James* ſpeaks, *ſet on fire of Hell*; marking their ſteps, purpoſing to overthrow their goings, imagining nothing but evil; ſo maliciouſly is he ſet againſt them; whoſe *Soul is as among Lions*, till God *break their Teeth in their Mouths*, and *ſmite the Jaw-bones* of them; ſending from Heaven to ſave ſuch from *the reproof of thoſe that would eat them up*; reſcuing, as by an *Angel ſtrengthening* them, or his *Grace ſufficient* for them.

Satan's Subtilty to draw us into Sin.

IT is ſaid of the *Panther*, That he bears ſuch an hatred unto Man, that if he ſees but the Picture of one, he will tear it in pieces: So the Devil hath a perfect hatred to the Image of God in any; having *great Wrath* againſt ſuch as will not give place to him; (thoſe his Enemies that will not ſuffer him to rule over them, by letting Sin get the upper hand, uſurp and reign in their *mortal Body*, to be obeyed in the *Luſts thereof*:) the Fierceneſs of whom God doth yet reſtrain. And if he cannot hurt our Souls, he delights in our Bodily Miſery and Pain, as we ſee in holy *Job*: And where he has no Licence to enter into our Bodies, to torment them, he deſires a Commiſſion to enter, if it be but into our *Swine*, to deſtroy them; that ſo we may however be more lightly affected, if not ſo ſorely

ſorely touch'd: So great is his Subtilty, ſo various are the Methods by which he draws into Sin, ſo deep his Reaches, ſo many his Contrivances to circumvent Men.

Firſt, Carrying them on to the utmoſt extent of their Bounds and Liberty; as knowing how dangerous it is to walk on the Brink of a Pit, and that *he who loveth danger, ſhall periſh therein*, Ecclus. 3. 26.

When we are at the utmoſt Limits, the next ſtep is into Sin; and if we are afraid to ſtep over it, we may yet ſtumble and fall upon it, and be ſorely bruiſed, and hurt in the Fall; or tempted to ſtretch the Lines of our Duty: and if there be not a Fence made about it, we may come ſo near, as not to be innocent, and the fierce Wrath of God may break out upon us. The beginning of Sin is Sin, whether very Concupiſcence be ſo or not; and you know how great a Fire one Spark kindleth. Every drop of Water is Water, and of the ſame nature to quench or drown; ſo Sin, to quench the holy Spirit of God, if wilfully committed, and continued in, and to drown Men in Perdition. I will not diſdain to fear ſmaller Sins, (ſays he) becauſe they are ſmall. but rather fear them, becauſe they are many: The whole Ocean is but a Drop multiplied, and of what huge weight is the Sand on the Sea-ſhoar, which yet is made up but of a very ſmall Grit? Is there any ſuch thing as a little Sin, only ſpeaking comparatively with reſpect to greater Enormities? And the leſs the Sin is, is it not aggravated with the greater contempt of God's Law, that it ſhould be diſobeyed in ſo ſmall and light a Matter, where there was ſcarce a Temptation to have done amiſs?

None need to keep up the Devil's Intereſt, as though ſome Sins were to be kept for Breed, or acted, as if only to keep the Sinner's hand in ure. And though Satan, the diſingenuous Tempter, that will afterwards *accuſe the Brethren*, repreſent Sin to us at the wrong end of the Perſpective; yet if we turn the Glaſs, we may ſee clearly how mightily 'tis magnified, and to what a vaſt bigneſs it ſoon grows, lifting up its accurſed head, looking Men half dead with fear and horrour, and the fiery Indignation and Wrath in a Judgment to come, though it be its own puniſhment too; and ſo fearful a thing is it, that Men guilty of it, may not dare ſo much as to turn their Eyes inward, or dive and deſcend into themſelves many times, but try to forget what is behind, while preſſing forward; for if they did but conſider the end of thoſe things, which is *Death*; were they ſo wiſe as to underſtand this; namely, to *conſider their latter end*; their conſidering might make them ſay, *What have I done?* And the ſight of their danger, putting them upon fleeing from *the Wrath to come*, they might *ſmite upon their Thigh*, and ſo return, when, like the Prodigal, they come to themſelves; but the *deceitfulneſs of Sin* hardens; otherwiſe it would pull down the moſt cheerful Spirit; as we ſee in *David*, when touch'd with a ſenſe of it, and lay the Man howling on his Bed.

The Devil knows that nothing can hurt us but Sin; and when he ſays, *Is it not a little one?* and *your Soul ſhall live*; or, *ye ſhall not ſurely die*; do ye not know that *he was a Lyar from the beginning*, and remains ſo ſtill, and will do to the end? Shall I believe my Enemy, who when he *ſpeaketh a Lye, ſpeaketh of his own?* Shall I truſt him angling for

for my Soul) to the making God a Lyar, who ſays, *The wages of Sin is Death*? As tho' any could ſwallow the Bait, and yet not be ſtruck with the Hook. Can a Man take hot burning coals into his boſom, and not be burnt? or touch Pitch, and not be defiled?

Sin is as a *Menſtruous Cloth*, and of a *Leprous Nature*; you know how ſoon it overſpred the whole World; and however it may enchant with pleaſing pains, if there be any kind of pleaſure in Sin, for its ſeaſon; yet it ſtings like a Serpent, Adder's Poiſon is under it; and as when one is bit of what is venomous, the Poyſon ſoon ſpreads it ſelf over the whole Body: Thus is it with Sin; it makes the whole Head ſick, and the whole Heart faint; breaks the Spirit, untunes the Affections, diſorders the Will, puts the whole Soul out of joint, and rifles the whole Man, making him uneaſie, and a Terror to himſelf.

Then when Men grow weary of the burden of their Sin (for it is like a Sore one, too heavy for them to bear) Satan puts the Change upon them, to divert them, when they ſay, *They have no pleaſure therein.* If they look back, he then ſuggeſts, *The Soul that hath ſinned muſt die.* But if they are willing, when he asks them to go a Mile further with him, to go twain; he then encourages them in an evil way; ſhewing what a great while it is with them ere night, and telling them they may, with the Grace of God, get back again ſafe, and that in very good time; and how that it is moſt pleaſant travelling the ways of Vertue in the Evening of our days, when our Paſſions are cooleſt; and what does the Patience and Long-ſuffering of God ſerve unto, ſays he? Yet ſurely not to encourage any one to continue in Sin, that ſo *Grace may abound*;

abound; not to be wanton'd with, and to be abus'd, except we would have the Divine Clemency turn to Fury; and unleſs Deſpair be ſo: Can there be a greater Abuſe of Mercy? Can there be a greater Wrong done unto it, than to ſin only in hopes of it? I am ſure the Apoſtle would have you to know how that this Patience, and forgiving Attribute of God, or that his Goodneſs, ſhould ſerve rather to another end; namely, to *lead us to Repentance*, when ſo graciouſly waited on, and liſtned after, to hear if we would *take unto us words, and return unto the Lord, that ſo our Iniquity might not be our Ruine.* And the Devil has the leaſt reaſon of any to offer unto us the conſideration of God's Mercy, to keep us in Sin; foraſmuch as he beholds his Severity towards the loſt Angels.

Again, Sin being baſe in it ſelf, ſome Sins he tries to make faſhionable in the World, and ſo conſequently creditable with Men of *corrupt Minds*, whoſe *underſtanding is darkened*; and you know how prevailing the Faſhion of this World is; how tyrannical among as many as care to be conformable to the World; as though it was as good being out of the one, as not in the other; and though when the humor of the Age is paſt, the late mode ſeem never ſo ridiculous & pedantick; yet while in vogue with the People, it was thought comely; and as tho' neceſſary to the very conſtituting of a Gentleman. A Man of no Faſhion, is but another term for a Man of no Repute in the World; for that alas, what has it but the *Faſhion thereof, which paſſeth away?* The God of this World blinds Men, as with a kind of Magick Art; or ſets things in ſuch falſe Lights; ſo diſguiſes and nick-names them, as that they may be miſtaken, and not known, even by thoſe who do daily converſe with them. Thus

Thus Pride of Heart, that Tympany of the Mind, is ſet forth to view, as Nobleneſs and Gallantry; or, as dreſs'd with Decency, Comelineſs, and Ornament: Anger, boil'd up to a Conſiſtency, or Revenge, as Greatneſs of Spirit; and the paſſing by an Injury, or putting up a Wrong, as Cowardice and Mean-Spiritedneſs; undue Pleaſures, or immoderate Uſe of lawful ones, Exceſs in Meat and Drink, not as Revelling and Wantonneſs, rioting and Drunkenneſs; but as Mirth and good Humour, or rejoycing in the abundance of all things; making our Soul enjoy Good; yet as hating the brutal Sin of Voluptuouſneſs; over-reaching, Cheating, or Purloyning, as no more than Out-witting; but as hating Deceitfulneſs, and the Sin of Unfaithfulneſs: As if Men could induſtriouſly make Proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfil it in the Luſts thereof, and count nothing but Senſual Pleaſure a Vital Life, without being carnally minded, which is Death: Or, as if Cozenage, Over-reaching, and going beyond one another in Bargaining, was not the Sin that ſticks ſo cloſe between Buying and Selling: Or, as if profuſely to waſte or make away his Maſter's Goods, was not enough at that Day to denominate a Man an unprofitable Servant. Perſons are the ſame, whether Bare-fac'd or Masked; and ſo are Sins too; but with that of Hypocriſie added unto them, when veil'd.

The exceſſive Love of Money is a Root of Evil, though it lie hid in the Earth; and Covetouſneſs is, and will be, accounted for Idolatry, whether the earthly-minded Man fall down proſtrate before his Gold to Worſhip the Image on his Coyn, or not; 'tis enough that his Heart runs after his Covetouſneſs,

vetouſneſs, and there is a Woe denounced againſt him. You may, if you pleaſe, call inordinate care, Prudent and Provident, and ſo may you call Darkneſs, Light; you may reckon immoderate Proviſion, good Husbandry, and laying by in ſtore againſt the Evil Day; and count the joyning Houſe to Houſe, the laying Field to Field, and the heaping up Riches till there be no room, due care for Poſterity; whenas Men know not indeed, though they think themſelves provided of an Heir, who ſhall gather what the Parent has ſo laid up for the Children; or whether he has laboured for the Wind to ſcatter it abroad: So, in vain ſometimes do Men diſquiet themſelves, walking in a vain ſhew of what ſhall never be hereafter; and then with the Men of this World, who have their Portion in it, to ſtroke him with a gentle Cenſure that lades himſelf with thick Clay, preſſing his Soul down to grovel here beneath; as by ſaying he is a good Man, only a little Covetous; Is it not to *ſpeak Good of the Covetous whom God abhorreth?* If Men wearied in the ways of Wickedneſs, tired and worn out with their early riſing, late taking reſt, (if any at all,) and eating the Bread of carefulneſs, begin to think of breaking off ſuch their Sin, and boggle at their going any farther therein, trying to eſchew their own Wickedneſs: Then the Devil tries if he can lead them into the contrary Extreme; as knowing, if he can make a covetous Perſon profuſe and prodigal, he has but changed the Diſtemper. And when we ſee the odiouſneſs of one Vice we were formerly addicted to, we are apt to avoid it ſo, as though we thought we could never run far enough from it; whereas indeed a Man may turn his back upon the Eaſt, and travel ſo far

Weſt-

Weſtward, as to come to the Eaſt again: Wherefore take heed you do not Sin in a Circle; for though the Devil cannot be thought to drive us two contrary ways at once; yet Prodigality may bring us to ſuch a State at the laſt, as occaſionally to end in Covetouſneſs: For *Satan*, when he Aſſaults, ſuits his Temptation according to Men's preſent Exigencies: Thus he tempted our Lord to make Bread of Stones, when he had Faſted till an Hungred: he alſo conſiders every one's Natural Temper and Complexion; to the Voluptuous, there's Pleaſure (ſays he) to be had, take it, let no Flower of the Spring paſs by uncrop'd, but Crown your Head with Roſe-buds, neither let it want any Ointment; to the Worldling he offers Profit, for the ſame Bait will not kill all alike, or at all times the ſame; wherefore he may ſcarce ſo much as tempt the Timorous, to Prophaneneſs, and to caſt off all Religion, any more than the Diſſolute and Licentious, to ſoftneſs of Heart; but watches his opportunity to carry Men on farther in what they are prone unto by Nature, or Cuſtom, or both: And in ſuch caſes he may moſt miſerably cheat and delude them with a reſolve of committing but this or that one Sin only, or but this one time more, and ſo diſcard and caſt it off, quite abandon it for ever; whereas if there be ſuch a Sin as might truly be called ſimply one; yet ſuch an one allowed, is deadly; as one Wound, one bruiſe, one Fall, may kill a Man, and one otherwiſe a ſound Man too. May not one Diſtemper prove Mortal? Yea, one Fit of ſome dangerous Sickneſs may as effectually diſpatch a Man, as a Complication of Diſeaſes beſetting him, laying Siege to every part, leaving none whole.

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One ſort of Weed is able to ſpoyl the whole Field of good Corn; yea, enough to choak it after all the Husband-man's care, and pains, and coſt, to prepare, manure, and dreſs it.

And as to the taking up in a ſinful courſe; Who can ſtop it in its full Career, ſo well as he may hinder it in its ſetting out? For that gathers ſtrength in going, as Limbs may by conſtant uſe; ſo our earthly Members as well as natural ones; but to be weakned, like them, by conſtant girding and hard tying of them up; wherefore do not teach them to go, but rather ſtop the beginnings. Watch narrowly thine own Heart, and ſtifle the firſt Motions in the Birth. He that ventures to ride an unruly Beaſt, (as Sin is maſterly and headſtrong,) cannot, if he once lets go the Reins eſpecially, take up when he will, but is in danger of being run away with, how far, or whither, he knows not; and in hazard of being mortally hurt, if he be not able to ſit it all out, and to endure his mad ſpeed.

Sin is a deep Precipice; and who can ſay, when he is falling downward, thus far will I fall, and no farther? The accounting ſome Sins Venial, others Mortal, is to miſtake the Nature of Sin, if we think any ſuch as in its own Nature is not damnable, when wilfully committed at the leaſt; and many others unpardonable, though truly repented of: For if the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt could have truly been repented of, perhaps our Lord would not have pronounced ſuch an irrevocable Sentence againſt it; but it being the utter rejecting of the greateſt means of Salvation, and attributing that Power of God to confirm the Word, the Working of Miracles, to the Devil: What could be done more in a rational way to ſave ſuch? Such

as do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt, till it be grieved and chaſed away; and when God has forſaken a Man, there is a neceſſity of his dying in his Sins, and then he muſt inevitably periſh, whether God ſware or not in his Wrath that he ſhould never enter into his reſt. Some may think the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which our Lord ſpake of, is not capable of being committed in theſe after Ages by us, who do not ſee thoſe Miracles wrought, nor reject maliciouſly againſt our ſelves the Perſon of Chriſt manifeſted in the Fleſh, ſtirring up the People to deſtroy or put him to Death, ſtraitly charging Men to ſpeak no more in that Name, under pain of being put out of the Synagogue, or being caſt into Priſon, or being beaten with Rods, that ſo his Doctrine might ſpread no farther, but be buried with him, and put to ſilence in the Grave; that he might be forgotten, like a dead Man out of Mind; that the very remembrance of him might be cut off and taken away, that ſo he might be as if he had never been; that his Memorial might periſh from off the Earth, or be remembred but with infamy and diſgrace.

Such deſpight as this our Lord might ſeem to doom; for indeed, if they would forſake their own Mercy, to gratifie their revengeful Humour, againſt a Man that ſhould tell them the Truth, villifie them to the People, calling them *blind Guides*, cautioning others not to be led blindly into the Ditch by them, who ſaid they ſaw, and therefore had the greater Sin.

If our Lord knew there was no *other Name by which Men muſt be ſaved*, and they proudly would becauſe they would reject him, and chooſe rather to periſh, than come humbly to him for Life:

How

How could ſafety it ſelf ſave them? And then graciouſly ſeeking unto them (*had I not come and ſpoke to them*, &c.) knowing what was in Man, and that he acted to ſuch an high degree of efficiency, as rationally to have convinced them, tho' they were purpoſely ſo reſolved never to be convinced, as that he might marvel at their unbelief; knowing alſo that there was no remedy ordained of God Almighty for Men's wilfulneſs; and that God's Spirit had ſtriven till it would ſtrive no more perhaps, though only as ſeeing they would never be reclaimed by it, and ſo inhance their Damnation, and therefore in pity left them. What could we imagine our Lord (who never flattered any Man in his Sins) ſhould ſay unto ſuch Men, that might otherwiſe be learned and knowing enough? And yet when having been ſo long foretold, ſo long waited for, and joyfully expected, the *Meſſiah* was indeed come, and ſo veiled his Glory as to be cloathed with Humanity; and leaving the Boſom of his Father, whoſe expreſs Image he was, dwelt with Men; that they, as if he had not been fit to live, ſhould cry, *away with him, crucifie him*, and, for envy deliver him ſo to be, though he had done many good Works among them, and went about doing Good: I ſay, what could our Lord be thought to ſay unto ſuch, but, *O ye Generation of Vipers*! thus to ſting the Breaſt that warms and cheriſhes you, *How can ye eſcape the Damnation of Hell?*

But now wherein is the likeneſs of the caſe of ſome, who yet fear they have committed the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, to make it run parallel to that we have been ſpeaking of? Is it all one to deſpiſe, and ſcorn, and hate, to envy, and reſiſt, and kill the Lord of Life; and to Honour him in

our

our Hearts above all, to ſuffer ſhame for his Name, to love and adore, to fear to offend him, to come unto him, humbly beſeeching that we may have Life, believing in him, ſo as that if he do not ſave us, we periſh, praying him therefore in no wiſe to caſt us out, but to hear and help us when we call upon him? May we not ſay unto ſuch, go in Peace, or tell them what has been taught and publickly owned; namely, that the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt is ſo malicious a Sin, as not to be committed of Infirmity unawares; neither did he commit it, that deſired he might not commit it, but be free from it?

There are other Deluſions of *Satan*, ſuch as to make us ſtand ſtill in the Ways of Godlineſs: which is indeed to go backward; for Men cannot, as in Temporal Things, get ſuch a Stock before-hand, as to have enough to Live upon for many Years, without their labour of Love and Improvement of their Graces; which Talents are not to be laid up in a Napkin; but ſhould, like Trees planted in the Houſe of God, bring forth more Fruit in their Age: For he was never yet good enough, that did not try to be better. Indeed, what Man that has got a great deal by Trading one Year, would live ſo idly as to loſe it the next? Some, the Devil may perſwade that they do ſtand ſtill, or go backward in the ways of Piety; whenas indeed they are going from Grace to Grace, and from Vertue to Vertue. A living Tree cannot be ſeen to grow any more than a Child is perceived to be growing towards a Man every Moment of its Life, till it come to the fulneſs of Stature. We do not ſee how good and wholſome Food nouriſhes the Body; yet we continuing our daily Meals are benefitted

by them, and made ſtronger: So is it with our Spiritual Food; if we hear the Word diſpenſed, and do partake often of the Lord's Supper, and the like; this is the proper Food for our Souls, to keep them in Health and Vigour. And if our Faith, and Patience, and Charity, *&c.* be increaſed in us, we may be better and ſtronger Chriſtians in the main than formerly, though our often Infirmities may make us ſuſpect otherwiſe; we may meet with ſtronger and more Temptations than formerly we met with, when we were not ſo apt to be overcome of Evil. Bodily Infirmity may incline, and Old Age be more prone to ſuch or ſuch Paſſions or Affections; as the Man may poſſibly yield too much unto, and more than he uſed to do formerly, and yet now be a more perfect Man in Chriſt Jeſus than when ſuch things were more eaſily avoided by him, and he thinks he was kept more free from them.

A Man is naturally ſtronger than a Child, and yet it may ſo happen through ſome miſchief, ſome Fall hurting him, that the otherwiſe a ſtrong Man, may for a time be weaker, and leſs able to help himſelf up again when done, than when a Child; though ſtay but a while, and the Man may recover his ſtrength; and we ſay a Bone well ſet is the ſtronger. Very Weakneſs and Infirmity ſometimes may endear a Child to the Parent, and move it to help, yea, and pity it; and Pity and Love may beget each other. Now God Almighty's Pity is operative and effective, though not like Man's, accompanied with a ſort of uneaſineſs, pain, or grief. But the ſinning with an high Hand preſumptuouſly, as not ſufficiently ſenſible of the Majeſty of God; or as *putting the Evil Day far from us*; or in hopes of

of repenting hereafter; theſe are ſome of Satan's Great Gun's to batter us down; and to Other's Thouſands may have ſlain their Ten Thouſands.

Pardon for the Penitent.

REpentance is the Gift of God, and we ſhould pray for it, or we may ſeek it carefully with Tears, and yet not be able to find it: Can we, having wanton'd with it, again command the Grace of God? Or, having in our Heart ſaid to the Almighty, *Depart from us*, ſay as powerfully as He concerning the Children of Men turned to Deſtruction, *Come again?* Has God any where promiſed Repentance to the obſtinate Sinner, though Pardon to him that truly Repents? And yet another ſhot of our Arch Enemy that Grand Engineer, is to make Men forſake their own Mercy, as judging themſelves unworthy of Eternal Life; to ſit down, as quietly as they can, in more than midnight-horrour and deſpondency, as if *God had forgotten to be Gracious*, and would *ſhut up his Loving Kindneſs in Diſpleaſure, neither would be any more entreated at all*, as if *his Mercy was clean gone, come to an utter end.*

Now is not this becauſe we have wronged one Attribute of God, therefore to add this to our former Wickedneſs, namely, to wrong another alſo? Becauſe we were ſo injurious and unfaithful as to diſobey his righteous Laws, and break the *Holy Commandment, daſhing one Table againſt the*

other: Does not He therefore, if we confeſs our Sins, and forſake them, remain Faithful and Juſt to forgive us our Sins, to pardon the Penitent? Are our Sins infinite? His Mercies are ſo, of which therefore we cannot frame an adæquate Notion; for as is his Majeſty, ſo is his Mercy, and Mercy rejoyces againſt Judgment; ſo that we may lift up our Heads ſtill, though our Sins are for number like the Hairs thereof, and though our Heart hath fail'd us: For though theſe things are all known unto God from the Beginning, our ſecret Sins are done in the ſight of his Countenance, to whom all things are open and anatomized, whoſe Prerogative it is to ſearch the Heart, and who *underſtandeth our very thoughts, and that afar off*; yet he turneth his Face from our Sins, as though to prevent his whole Diſpleaſure from ariſing; for he is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity with approbation; yea, or without abhorrence: Though God be provoked every day to *take Vengeance*, to whom alone *it belongeth*; yet becauſe his *Compaſſions fail not*, our Iniquity is not our Ruine, Mercy rejoycing over Judgment, in this Day of Grace, we are not conſumed, but are as ſo many Living Monuments thereof. Wherefore let us *not hold faſt Deceit*, nor *imagine Miſchief as a Law*, let us *not offend of Malicious Wickedneſs*, nor *love Darkneſs*; let us not *draw Iniquity with Cords of Vanity, and Sin as it were with a Cart-rope*, Iſa. 5. 18. If we ſtumble, let us not with the World lie in Wickedneſs; for ſhall we fall, and not riſe? Shall we turn away, and not return? Shall we ſlide back with a perpetual backſliding? Let us not ruſh brutiſhly, like the Horſe into the Battle, to commit Sin with greedineſs, earneſtly with both Hands, *ſelling ourſelves to work Wicked-*

Wickedneſs in the ſight of the Lord, and that continually, till there be no remedy, 2 Chron. 36. 16. Let us not delight only in thoſe that do ſuch things, as bring the *Wrath of God upon the Children of Diſobedience*; let not our Mind and Conſcience be firſt defiled, then *ſeared as with an hot Iron*, and our ſelves *paſt feeling, uncircumciſed of Heart and Ears, ſtopping them like the deaf Adder, refuſing to hear the Voice of the Charmer, Charm he never ſo wiſely, nor always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt; but let him that hath Ears to hear, hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Church; let him hearken what the Lord God ſhall ſay, ſpeaking Peace: As I Live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the Death of a Sinner, but had rather he ſhould turn and live*: And to encourage him ſtill the more, if he *will put away the evil of his doings, ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well; though his Sins were of a deep Dye as Scarlet; they ſhall be made White as Snow; if like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool*; and all his former Wickedneſs ſhall be forgot, never ſo much as upbraidingly once mentioned unto him; but in the Righteouſneſs he doth, *in that ſhall he live*: Nevertheleſs, if he goes on to fill up the Meaſure of his Iniquity, heaping up Wrath; 'tis hard to give Comfort, where God ſaith there is no Peace: He will *wound the Hairy Scalp* of ſuch an one as goeth on ſtill in his Wickedneſs; he will make ready the *Strings of his Bow againſt the Face of them*; he will prepare for them the *Inſtruments of Death*, whoſe final impenitency ſeals them under Condemnation; he will Whet his glittering Sword to cut them in pieces, (making it drunk with Blood,) and will appoint them their Portion with Unbelievers; he will open a way to his diſpleaſure, if Mercy be enraged, to avenge him on his Enemies; ah, how

he will eaſe him of his Adverſaries! Juſtice will avenge the abuſe and ſlight of Mercy, if Men *ſtiffen their Neck as an Iron Sinew, and harden their Heart as an* Adamant, *or* Flint, *and their Forehead as a Brow of Braſs*, ſtriking at the very Being of God; when Iniquity is aſtoniſhing great, and reaches up to Heaven, as though it meant to Dethrone the Majeſty there; when the Heart is ſo deſperately wicked, as to cauſe an inundation or over-flowing of Ungodlineſs; and Sins like an Apoſtate Angel, as though hardened in Contumacy, and fleſh'd in Contempt.

Though Sin, ſo Triumphant in its own Conqueſts, and enlarging of its Dominion; lifting up its accurſed Head, as though it had got the better of the Patience and Long ſuffering, of the Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, and Mercy of God, (a ſad and dreadful Conqueſt,) be Sin in its Regency and Exaltation; yet there are Sins of leſs Rank and Quality, ſuch as may be unwittingly committed, or at leaſt acted or ſaid in our haſte, or of ſudden ſurreption; Humane Frailties, ſuch as if the common Nature of Man was almoſt to anſwer for them, at leaſt ſuch as are twined about our Youth, or ſwaddled us in our Infancy, the Sin we were born with, or that in which our Mother conceived us, interwoven with corrupted Nature, accompanying our very Frame and Make; all which, if *God ſhould be extreme to mark, who might abide it? But there is Mercy with him that he may be feared*, and this Mercy is Man's beſt Plea. And as if the Miſery of Man was not great enough to move it to pity: Does not God make it his own great Argument, where he nevertheleſs is ſaid to do ſo or ſo for his own *Name's ſake*, or for his *Mercy's ſake?* For his

Mercy

Mercy is free: Or, what could move him at the firſt to make the World out of nothing? Did he not ſpeak out the Creation, that he might communicate his Inherent Bounty and Goodneſs towards the ſenſible part of it? And is there any Creature capable of it, that has not taſted and ſeen *How Gracious the Lord is?* And when Man, the Darling of the nether Ball, that was chiefly happy, had by Tranſgreſſion fallen, it was more Gracious again to receive him, and love him freely, after he had ſo offended, than at firſt to give him all things, with Life and Being; for then, though there was nothing in Man to move God to love him; (for what could be before he was made?) yet there was nothing likewiſe that was odious in God's ſight, and hateful unto him; unleſs what his foreſight gave him, Man's after-Rebellion. But herein doth God commend his Love to us, that when we were in our Blood, he ſhould ſay unto us, *Live*; and by ſuch a means, as that while we were yet Enemies, Chriſt ſhould *Die* for us; that the Perſon offended ſhould ſeek reconciliation *(we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead that ye be reconciled to God,)* and that he ſhould find out a way for it, that Man (if his Eternal State had depended upon it) could never have thought on; or if he had, may be, durſt not have ask'd, for fear of increaſing his own damnation.

Now when ſuch a Prize is put into our Hands, ſhall we not make uſe of it? When ſuch a Bleſſing drops from Heaven, ſuch a Preacher of Righteouſneſs was ſent to turn us from our *evil ways*, ſuch a Pattern of Good Works for us to imitate, ſuch a Lamb ſlain to take away the Sins of the world, ſuch a Scape-Goat to carry Sin out of it: How ſhall we continue any longer in Sin, or eſcape, if we neglect

ſo great Salvation? *For God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life: For God ſent not his Son into the World to condemn the World; but that the World through him might be ſaved, that lay in Darkneſs and in the Shadow of Death, tainted with putrifying Sores,* and over-run as with a Gangreen, which but one Balm could heal, and none but the Phyſician of Souls could apply; ſo wonderful and miraculous was the Cure, as by *his ſtripes to be healed, who was bruiſed for our Iniquity, though a Man without Guile, and made Sin for us, (who himſelf knew no Sin,) that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him*; that in him we might have Life, and have it more abundantly: And this is the Sanctuary to flee unto, even at the very *Horns of the Altar*; theſe are the ſacred and ſtrong Bands with which God has been pleaſed to bind himſelf; and our Neceſſities lead us to the Promiſes, they to Chriſt, and Chriſt to God; we ſue or pray him to remember his Word unto his Servants, wherein he has cauſed us to put our Truſt.

There is Wonder in the moſt ordinary Works of God; excellent Wiſdom in making of the Heavens, drawing them out and ſpreading them like a Curtain; admiration in his hanging the Earth upon nothing, and ſetting Bounds to the Sea, that the Water does not ſpread and cover the Earth; beautiful Order in the mutual ſucceſſion of Day and Night, Times and Seaſons; Omnipotent Power in making every thing that hath Life, or but a ſpire of Graſs.

But do we not ſeem to ſet the Attributes, if not alſo the Unity of God at ſtrife, about our Salvation?

tion? Does there not ſeem to be an holy Conflict between them for our ſakes? That he ſhould be merciful to Sinners, infinitely merciful, and yet infinitely juſt; and then *able to ſave to the utmoſt all that come to him, according to the greatneſs of his Power*, as a Lord God Almighty; *the Judge of all the Earth doing right*; God that taketh vengeance, that hateth Sin with more than mortal hatred, and by his firſt Covenant might ſeem to have bound himſelf to deſtroy us after our Tranſgreſſion; and yet ſo ready to forgive, ſo ſeldom puniſhing, our Lord taking away the extreme Malediction, *being made a Curſe for us*; *who hath delivered us from the power of Darkneſs, and tranſlated us into his Kingdom, in whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the forgiveneſs of Sins, and are made meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in light*; being delivered from the ſtrength of Satan's Servitude, and more than *Egyptian* Bondage, and *brought into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*, through his dear Son, *who is made unto us Wiſdom, and Righteouſneſs, and Sanctification, and Redemption*; that *Tree of Life, whoſe Leaves are for the healing of the Nations.*

And the admirably divine Work of Recovering loſt Man, lay hid in God, before time began, and afterwards, in time darkly appeared, was faintly ſhadowed out, though now to us expreſs'd fully to the Life, ſet forth in proper colours, beautiful, and pleaſing to the Beholders, ſtanding in a true Light, to diſcern it as it is; pleaſant, I ſay, to ſee the whole World, that *lay under condemnation, ſought, and ſaved*; for *all had come ſhort of the Glory of God*, and his *Wrath had remained upon all*; and who can tell the weight of his heavy diſpleaſure, the ſevere ſtroke of his Hand taking vengeance?

We

We had been *without God in the World*, born with our backs upon Heaven, ſtraying farther from it, like an Arrow ill levell'd at hand, which, the farther it flies, the more wide of the Mark; we had been *ſold under Sin*, faſt bound in *Ignorance*, and ſhut up in *Darkneſs*, had not Chriſt come *a Light to lighten every one that comes into the World*; for howe'er ſome Philoſophers among the Heathen, ſome devout Men and Women among the *Jews*, might be ſo inſtituted, and at firſt ſeaſon'd with good Education, as though it was meant they ſhould abſtain from every evil way, not ſo much out of a vertuous choice, as meer Ignorance of any thing that was vicious; yet 'tis not their ſevere Inſtitution; 'tis not the more pure and refined Heathen Philoſophy; 'tis not the ordinary *Moſaical* Inſtruction, and Ceremonial Sanctity; no, nor the more ſtrict and improved Chriſtian Education, or Contrition either, that can take away Sin, that can reſtore and heal the Faculties of our Souls, make perfect, or preſerve and keep, from more groſs and habitual Sin, from the *deceitfulneſs* thereof.

And if original Weakneſs or Impurity had been vincible; yet *who can ſay I have waſhed my hands in Innocency?* For *what man is he that liveth and ſinneth not?* Yea, *in many things we offend all.* For if very Concupiſcence be taken for a Man's Innocence, ſo long as it is reſtrained and kept under; yet are not Childhood and Youth Folly? Have not the young Man's Ways need of cleanſing? In more Maturity, are not the Affections depraved? In full blown Years, is not the Underſtanding dark? In Ripeneſs of Age, is not the Will crooked and perverſe? In Health and Strength, are not the Paſſions unruly and impetuous? The occurrent

occurrent Blandiſhments of the World ſlily inſinuting and alluring, ſtealing the Heart away by Subtilty? Are not the Temptations of the Fleſh boiſterous and raging? And will not that grudge if it be not ſatisfied? In Weakneſs and Sickneſs, are not the Aſſaults of the Devil violent and ſtrong, as the whole Man weak? At all times are not evil Examples prevalent? And is it not hard ſtemming the Tide of Ungodlineſs, making Men afraid carrying whole Shoals, like dead Fiſh ſwimming down the Stream? Are not evil Counſels of weight, to ſink deep into us? Do we not infect one another with Vice as with a Contagion, as though the Breath of Men, like an infected Air, did corrupt inſenſibly? Is there not a Spirit and Genius of Wickedneſs in the World? A Proneneſs of Nature? Beſide what takes Men unawares, are there not many Incitements, and very provoking ones too? So that, how ſhould a Man, weakened by the Fall of *Adam*, as to any thing good, and having a ſtrong Byaſs upon him to run counter to the Commands of God, and to walk contrary to him, come unto him, unleſs *drawn with the Cords of a Man?* Or how ſhall ſuch an one ever eſcape the pollution which is in the World, but by Faith? Or at leaſt what manner of Man muſt he be in *all holy Converſation?* Not that I dare affirm, 'tis impoſſible for any to continue in all that is written, leſt I ſhould conſequently be forced to own God's righteous Commandments on Man's part, impracticable; a Yoke, and an heavy Burden, ſuch as none can be able to bear. Neither dare I aſſert, that any perſon of *Adam*'s Poſterity ſhould have periſhed everlaſtingly, only becauſe *Adam* fell by Tranſgreſſion; for in eternal Retributions, every one

one ſtands or falls to himſelf; *The Father ſhall not bear the iniquity of the Son, nor the Son that of the Father.* But by *Adam*'s Fall, humane Nature was ſo weakened, ſuch a Door opened for Sin to enter, that every Man would have fallen in the Ways of it himſelf, and ſo have died for his own Sin; ſo that God's Ways had nevertheleſs been equal, Man's Ways unequal; ſince, as Chriſt, in the *foreknowledge of God, was a Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the World*; ſo in his account, *all we like Sheep, were as gone aſtray*; wherefore our Lord *came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt: In the fulneſs of Time God ſent forth his Son, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.* And the Miſery of Man upon Earth, productive of a far greater in another World, moved God, the God of all Mercy, not with any reſpect of Profit to himſelf, or Merit then in us, no Man having at all *firſt given him*, according to that of the Apoſtle; but againſt Merit on our part, did he beſtow his Grace and Favour: For Man in Thraldom, and in the very *Gall of Bitterneſs*, Man in the Bondage of Nature, the full power and abſolute dominion of Sin, was ſo far from repenting of his evil deeds, moſt ungodlily committed (which Repantance muſt have been unprofitable) and ſo far from mending of his own doings, that he would neither have been able nor willing to repent, or pleaſe God at all, any farther than it fell in with his own carnal Delight; for which, God having now rendered him fit, calls him to Repentance, and Faith in Jeſus Chriſt; who, *for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame*: And what was that Joy, the light of which ſo revived his very Soul, amidſt his cruel Sufferings,

Sufferings, ſweetning the Dregs of that bitter Cup, but the pleaſurable ſatisfaction of ſhewing Mercy, of redeeming loſt Man? *Seeing of the travail of his Soul, he was ſatisfied that he ſhould however juſtifie many*, Iſa. 53. 11. And God did lay on him the Iniquity of us all, becauſe Juſtice did ſtand up to require ſatisfaction in oppoſition to abſolute remiſſion of Sins; wherefore, that *Juſtice and Mercy might kiſs each other*, he did not without any ſuffering for the ſame, quit Sin and let it go free; this had not ſo plainly ſhewed his hatred to it, or ſo manifeſted his love to Juſtice: And where had been his Threatnings of Sin, had they not fallen to the ground? And then what would have become of his Veracity? One Attribute in God is not contrary to another, that they ſhould meet and claſh; neither muſt the excellent Glory of one ſo out-ſhine another, as to Eclipſe it at all; for every thing in God is infinite, ſuch as can neither be added unto, nor taken from. And if Chriſt had not ſtood in the place of Sinners, to ſuffer for Sin, where (I ſay) had been God's Denunciations againſt it? Had they not all proved light and harmleſs Thunder? And that Men might not be ſuffered to continue any longer in Sin, or think to do ſo that Grace might abound; the Covenant of Grace runs in ſuch a tenor, as to require repentance in Man from Dead Works; and that which any one truly repents of, he hates, he utterly diſclaims and abominates.

Thus you may ſee the temperament of Juſtice and Mercy in Man's recovery. And ſince one hath born our Grief, and carried our Sorrow; upon whom the chaſtiſement of our Peace was laid, the Juſt having ſuffered for the Unjuſt, *Chriſt having died,*

died, yea rather being riſen again: who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? Shall Conſcience? But how ſhall God impute to us, what Chriſt has already ſatisfied for, to the utmoſt Farthing? God can purifie our Conſcience, and cleanſe even that, or pacifie it, *ſpeaking Peace by Jeſus Chriſt*; and he only can ſpeak to the Soul, and ſay, *He is its Salvation*; or if our Heart condemn us, God is ſtill greater than our Heart. And if *Satan* does accuſe, if the Judge acquit, 'tis not the Jaylor that can condemn; 'tis God that juſtifieth thoſe that have offended him, having reſpect to his *beloved Son, in whom he is well pleaſed.* So that he may ſeem to ſhew a ſort of tenderneſs to Mankind, as though he loved the Children of Men more than the Son of his Eſſence, in not ſparing him, but redeeming and adopting us by his Sufferings: For what we buy at a Price, we do at that time, by the very act of buying it, in a manner preferr it before what we do part with to give for it. And to enlarge our Hearts in thankfulneſs to him, what had it availed to have known God created us, if we had not known alſo the Redemption of Mankind by his Son our Lord? The very Nobleneſs of our Creation had aggravated our being for ever undone, who were at firſt made for Life and Glory. But our Redemption is as a New Birth unto Life, a Work of greater Mercy than the World's firſt Creation out of nothing; God's Love is more manifeſt, eſpecially when we conſider the wonderful manner of it; not like the Creation, when he only ſaid, *Let it be ſo*; nor but Six Days Work only, but a continued act of many good Works done, (beſide the many Gracious Words ſpoken as never Man ſpake,) and many evil and bitter things ſuffered:

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If the *Heavens be the Work of God's Hands or Fingers*, the Victory obtained for us over Death and Hell, was by his Holy Arm made bare. Heaven and Earth, as wide and distant as they are, had a great deal more easily been brought together than God and Man made one, after such an Eternal Barr put, and Obstacle remaining, had not Christ broken down the Partition-Wall; the plenteousness of whose Redemption is so startling, and amazingly great, as that *who can tell the merciful Acts of the Lord, or set forth all his praise?* Does not the Apostle seem to say that God was our Enemy, till reconciled to us by Jesus Christ? How came he then, while our Enemy, to prevent us with the Blessings of Goodness, and to give us his Son? If he hated us, how came he before reconciliation made by his Son for us, in a State of Hatred, to give him us, the greatest Blessing that can be imagined to be bestowed upon his Friends rather than his Enemies? The very giving of his Son to die for us, while we were his Enemies, was not a sign of his hatred but good-will towards us his Opposites.

Incomprehensible therefore, as well as immutable, is the Love of God towards us, who were rendred obnoxious to the Vengeance of Eternal Fire, and born Heirs of Damnation; then God of his Benignity freely found out a way to reconcile himself to us and love us; by the proposed Expiation, by the Death of Christ for us, we appeared as Holy, or were rendred as Just in his sight; who giving up his Son to suffer for it rather than let it go unpunished, did sufficiently shew his anger against Sin, which had caused the Breach between God and us: But his inestimable Love to Man, who may now come boldly

boldly to the Throne of Grace to find Mercy in the time of need; boldly, yet ſo as with an humble Confidence when we come before God to read our own Indictment, and to plead Guilty, having nothing to ſay why Judgment ſhould not paſs upon us, but to beg the Pſalm of Mercy, the benefit of our High Prieſt, *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to the multitude of thy Mercies, blot out that of my Tranſgreſſions, for I acknowledge my Faults, and my Sin is ever before me. I ſaid, I will confeſs my Sins unto thee, ſo thou forgaveſt the Iniquity thereof,* ſays he: For by confeſſing our Miſ deeds, we give Glory to God, if not alſo thereby acknowledge him to ſee and know what is done amiſs; for we do it not to tell him of our Faults, but to humble us, who *out of our own Mouths are condemned,* though we thus Judge our ſelves, that we might not be Judged of the Lord; for he that goes about to hide his Sin ſhall not proſper; but he that confeſſes and forſakes, ſhall find Mercy. 'Tis in vain to think there is *no Knowledge in the Moſt High*; or to ſay, *tuſh, how ſhall God perceive it?* And to endeavour to cover it, or any Circumſtance of it, Is it not impious, as derogatory to the Omniſcience of the Divine Majeſty? Whereas by open acknowledgment we may ſeem to gloriſie his Mercy, flinging our ſelves wholly upon it, relying upon him only for the remiſſion of Sins; we likewiſe acknowledge his Holineſs, while we confeſs we have highly offended him by our Wickedneſs; we clear his Juſtice alſo under whatever puniſhment he ſhall be pleaſed to inflict, or in what he ſhall therefore deny us; *As your Sins,* ſays the Prophet, *have with-holden good things from you.* And then we own God's Wiſdom too, by confeſſing we have done very

very fooliſhly in forſaking the Holy Commandment, *as we thought more wiſely walking after the Wiſdom of the Fleſh*, or that of this World.

And it is an eaſe to the Weary and Fainting under a great Load of Preſſures, to unlade themſelves upon the Bearer of our Iniquities, or a comfort to give vent to Godly Sorrow not to be repented of.

Penſive and Penitential Acknowledgment reacheth to the Mercy-Seat, contrariwiſe to the uſual way of proceeding in earthly Courts. The Sinner falling down, does as it were breath out his Sins, loaths and abhors them as a nauſeous Breath, ſo they vaniſh away, Mercy ſcattering them as a Cloud or Miſt before the Sun: And foraſmuch as the very Heart, that ſo notably guilty part of Man, does not know how oft it may have offended; at the foot of the ſad rehearſal of things done that ought not, and the pungent recital of others left undone that ſhould not have been omitted, we may reaſonably ſubjoin that of the Royal Pſalmiſt, *Lord, who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanſe thou us from our ſecret faults:* This was the good old way of hiding Sins, by revealing them; of diminiſhing them, by diſcounting for none they knew, but rather adding thoſe ſecret and hidden ones they knew not; thus making them little, yea nothing, by magnifying or making them great; and ſurely the ſhame is not ſo much in the confeſſing, as the acting; or if at all in the owning of them there be any: 'Tis but ſuch a ſhame as cannot accuſe a Man: And open Abſolution is better than ſecret Damnation, or the being loſt in ſilence, wiping our Mouth as though we had done no Evil; which, if it be not a Publican, is yet an Harlot Sin.

When pouring out our Souls unto God, humbling our ſelves when we fall low on our Knees before his Footſtool, we might make it one of our Petitions that he would make us *to know our Tranſgreſſions and our Sins*, Job 13. 23. and then our Mind is to run ſorrowfully upon them, and we are to be mightily affected with the ſenſe of them, as when the Oral Confeſſion ſo ſtrikes upon the Organs of the hearing Faculty or Power, as by them to ſink deep into our Heart; cauſing that ſorrowfully to vent its own Compunction and Grief at the Eyes, thoſe Flood-gates of the Body, for ſuch over-flowings of them, as though Fountains of Water rather than Light.

But we muſt not think that without ſome way or other being deeply touch'd with the ſenſe of Evil, and the bitterneſs of having departed from the Lord, he takes any ſuch pleaſure in our nauſeous raking in a Dunghil of filthy ſtench in his Noſtrils, as our Unrighteouſneſs you may be ſure is but as filthy Rags: And how can we imagine he has any delight in hearing what his Soul abhors, uttered and laid before him; namely, the breach of his Commandments; where it is not accompanied with inexpreſſible ſorrow and ſhame, with hearty reſolutions of amendment for the future? So that a root of bitterneſs ought to ſpring up in us and mightily to trouble us; not only for the miſchief and inconvenience, the loſs and detriment it brings along with it, as he that *purſueth Evil, purſueth it to his own hurt*; but that we have offended ſo loving a Father, and bounteous a Creator, giving all things freely to enjoy, holding our Soul in Life, till we provoke him, it may be, to cut us off; done deſpight to ſo merciful a Redeemer, that left the

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Boſom of his Father to come and bleſs us in turning us from our Iniquities; ſtinted, quench'd, or grieved, yea reſiſted ſo good and kind a Spirit, that would have ſanctified us throughout; all which did combine together for our Happineſs. This ſhould be the ſting of all, *againſt thee, thee only have I ſinned, and done Evil in thy ſight*: Here is the very Accent and Emphaſis of our Sorrow, to make it Godly, to be laid: This is to be the Bottom of our Anger, and Holy Revenge upon our ſelves, being ſcarce able ever to forgive our ſelves, when God, for Chriſt's ſake, has forgiven us; while we ſtill remain aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up our Eyes to Heaven, not for fear of Vengeance coming down from thence; but for very vexation of Heart, for having done ſuch things as render us unworthy to be called his Sons, when we come to our Father; diſobeying the Goſpel of Chriſt, and refuſing to give an obedient Ear to the loud Whiſpers of the Holy Spirit that would once and again gladly have been our Comforter: So that it is the Love of God, and not only of our ſelves, that ſhould even conſtrain us to repent. And he that is old enough to ſin, may ſeem old enough to repent; for like corroding Poyſon, Sin will eat, or as doth a Canker; and though ſome Sin may be more conſpicuous, as more exalted in a Man than other, his own Iniquity ought to have been eſchewed by him; yet no one known Sin but may very well diſpenſe with a particular repentance, not excluding a more general one for the many Errours and Failings in our imperfect State.

And it is not enough that a Man hold down his Head like a Bull-ruſh, for a Day or two; but the Compunction muſt improve into an hatred of all

falſe ways; as Men that have been like to ſurfeit unto Death with Intemperance or Exceſs ſometimes, do for ever after loath what cauſed it, nauſeate the very thought, or recoyl at the ſight: The hatred wherewith a true Convert hateth Sin, is greater than the former love wherewith he loved it.

And indeed as Vertue has a native luſtre, and is in it ſelf lovely, as Holineſs has an Oriental Beauty, and to be deſired as amiable: So has Sin a naturalturpitude in it;ſuch,as that an Heathen man would ſay,*If he knew aſſuredly that the Powers of Heaven would forgive the Iniquity of his Sin; yet he would bluſh to commit it for the baſeneſs of its own Nature.* Conſonant to which was that of *Anſelm*, who ſaid, *If he ſhould ſee the Shame of Sin on the one Hand, and the Torments of Hell on the other, and muſt of neceſſity chooſe one; he would rather be thruſt into Hell without Sin, than go into Heaven with it*: which, however it may ſound, or how extravagantly ſoever it may ſeem to be ſpoken; yet as the Joys of Heaven being ſpiritually pure and refined,would not reliſh or comport with any thing of Sin; (for what Communion hath Light with Darkneſs?) ſo neither would Hell be an Hell to one that was innocent; the Worm gnawing, Conſcience upbraiding, Self-Conviction, and ſuch reflections upon one's ſelf as an innocent Perſon could not make, being that which makes it a more ſenſible thick Darkneſs, and a more horrible Blackneſs for ever. And ſince nothing availeth but a New Creature, Sanctification throughout, ſo that we ought not to commit the leaſt Sin to obtain the greateſt Good; or to do any Evil, though we could ſave all the World by doing it; let us try to break the Serpent's Head,

Head, as well as mortifie our Members upon the Earth; and take heed that if the Head be not mortally wounded, though the Body ſeem otherwiſe to be deſtroyed, it does not ſoon joyn it ſelf to the Members, and enliven them again.

If the Fountain be not dryed up, though the Stream be ſtop'd, it will but for a while rage, and foam, and ſwell, till it burſt its Banks: if the branches only be lop'd off, if the root be not alſo ſtub'd up, but there remain ſtill Life in that, though hid in the Earth, we muſt have a care it does not again put forth, and bud like a Plant; the Sap in Winter may, when the Tree ſeems as dead, nouriſh and increaſe the Root. Let us look to the Spring of our Actions, ſee that there be not an Evil Heart; if there be, out of that will proceed many ill things, *a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump.* And as we ſhould, inſtead of tearing our Garments to expreſs our grief, rent our very Heart, weep for our Sins, the ſtonyneſs thereof being ſmitten till the Waters flow; as we ſhould *ſigh almoſt to the breaking of our Loyns, and be in bitterneſs as one that mourneth for his Firſt-Born.* As we ſhould be exerciſed in acts of Sorrow and Humiliation; ſo likewiſe we ſhould *bring forth other Fruits meet for Repentance*; we ſhould do ſome Heroical Acts to try as much as in us lies to make reparation to the Glory of God, which we by our Sins may have cauſed to be blaſphemed: And though after all our endeavours to recover our ſelves out of the ſnare of the Devil, and all our care to walk more circumſpectly for the future, we ſhall ſtill be but weak, frail Men, ſubject to Infirmities enough both of Fleſh and Spirit; yet we muſt fully reſolve, with a deliberate reſolution,

to walk from henceforth in the Commandments of God, blameleſs; and if we could even wiſh to be continued longer in the Land of the Living, only to put ſuch Reſolutions into act: If God ſees there be ſuch a change wrought, as that the Man would not *return like a Dog to his vomit*, but that there wants only time and opportunity to evidence to the World, *the New Man is created in him in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*; it is accepted with God, according to what a Man hath, and not exacted of him according to what he hath not.

But here take heed of the deceitfulneſs of the Heart; for if the *Will with the Affections and Luſts*, be not *crucified* with the *Old Man*; if the *whole Body of Sin* be not ſo deſtroyed, and all *falſe Ways* utterly abhorred; but that bating for the preſent Exigence, the Place or Circumſtances, all the abhorrence and ſeeming reſolutions would vaniſh, and become like the *early Dew*, that the Sun can no ſooner be up (Light no ſooner ſhine upon the Man) but it all paſſeth away: This is no more than a mere Brute will do, who will abſtain from what he eagerly deſires, while the Staff is over him. A crooked Stick may be held ſtrait; that if once let go, would fly in the face of him that held it ſo, and remain as crooked as ever. An Horſe that is very gentle and orderly, when catch'd up, and the Bit is in his Mouth, may as ſoon as turned looſe, preſently grow as wanton again as ever.

If we were upon our Sick-Bed, may be we might think we hated what indeed, if well again, we ſhould take pleaſure in; as a ſick Stomach may loath that Meat in its Sickneſs, which, afterward in Health it might inordinately love, and ſurfeit

on; but if men were to undergo the puniſhment of their Sins, before they acted them, would they buy ſo ſhort-liv'd Pleaſures, or a little Pelf, at ſo dear a rate? Would they cheriſh ſuch a Snake in their boſom, liſten to its Charms, or make much of its treacherous Embraces? Would they not rather ſhake it off, as they would a Viper, and avoid the Appearance, as they fly from the Face of a Serpent? With which, yet if ſtung, let them with the ſtung *Iſraelite*, look up, and they ſhall be healed. Though *the Earth quake, the Heavens tremble, the Sun and the Moon be dark, the Stars withdraw their ſhining, and Men's Hearts fail them*; though like the Prodigal, forced home by want, or like the brute Beaſts which he fed, though driven home by a Storm; when ye know no other ſhelter to turn in unto, *Turn ye even to me, ſaith the Lord.* If your Sin hath brought upon you the deſtruction of your Body, yet *ſeek unto God, and your Soul ſhall live. Although thou ſaiſt thou ſhalt not ſee him, yet Judgment is before him; therefore truſt thou in him*, Job 35. 14. *Wherefore let the wicked man forſake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God*, where the Particle [*our*] qualifies very much, *for he will abundantly pardon*, or *multiply Pardons*; ſo free is his Mercy, and ſo reconcilable his Favour, whoſe *loving kindneſs is better than the Life it ſelf.*

We muſt not think that God's Grace was not ſufficient for them both, that but one Thief was undoubtedly ſaved at the eleventh hour; for had the other prayed with the ſame Faith, Humility, and Devotion, to have been remembred in Chriſt's Kingdom, he ſhould not have needed to fear being forgot; for coming thus to him, *he ſhould in*

no wiſe have been caſt out, ſince he that ſeeketh, findeth; and how ſhould he not, if God *be found of them that ſought him not?* If then our return be rightly circumſtantiated, why ſhould we fear, even while *the iniquity of our heels compaſſeth us about?* If *caſt down, O my Soul, ſtill put thy truſt in God, the helper of our countenance, and our merciful God*; with *David*, take an humble confidence, and ſay, *Praiſe the Lord, O my Soul, who forgiveth all thy Sins, and healeth all thine Infirmities. Ye believe in God*, ſays our bleſſed Saviour, *believe alſo in me.* And why ſhould we not always be as exalted through Hope, as dejected through Fear? We have the ſame aſſurance of finding Mercy, if we truly believe and repent, as of vengeance overtaking us, if we go on to fill up the meaſure of our iniquities; the aſſurance, which is the Word of God, is the ſame on both ſides; the ſame which threatens vengeance to the Sin, reaches out Pardon to the Penitent Sinner; *For if any man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, who is a merciful High Prieſt, touch'd with a Fellow-feeling of our wants and miſery*; and therefore *came to call Sinners to Repentance. To the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgiveneſs, though we have rebelled againſt him.* It was ſaid of one of the *Caſars*, He that did dare to ſpeak to him, was ignorant of his Greatneſs; and yet he who dared not, was ignorant of his Goodneſs. Behold a greater than *Caſar*; of whom it may truly be ſaid, He that dare offend him, is not ſenſible enough of his Greatneſs, of which there is no end; and yet he, who having offended him, dare not hope in (I do not ſay, preſume on) his Mercy, is as ignorant of his Goodneſs, which is ſuch, as if like earthly Thrones, even his Heavenly

venly one was eſtabliſhed by Mercy; but then we muſt be fitted for it, by renouncing Sin in every appearance; for he does not truly hate Sin, as ſuch, that does not hate all; there muſt *none of the accurſed thing cleave to us*; or if ſearching our hearts, we find it hid in ſome cloſe receſs, we muſt *bring it, and ſlay it before the Lord*, though it ſeem grievous in our Eyes to caſt out this Bond-Servant: Sin muſt be pluck'd up, and rooted out of its dwelling, though it be like cutting off a right hand, or pulling out a right Eye, or even as rending of Soul and Body aſunder, and dividing between the Joints and Marrow; this one thing is abſolutely neceſſary; for if ſo polluted, *to what purpoſe is the multitude of your Oblations? But waſh you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings*, and God will vouchſafe to reaſon with you; but expect not that he will till then; but that *your Incenſe is an abomination*, if not your very *Prayer alſo a Sin*. Wherefore humble your uncircumciſed Heart greatly, and ſo let one Deep call upon another; the Depth of Sin, on the Depth of God's Mercy in Chriſt; who, when upon Earth, in the *days of his Fleſh*, how moved with compaſſion, when Men followed crying after him, how he pitied and helped them, when he ſaw them ſick, under noiſome Diſeaſes, or tormented with evil Spirits, if they deſired to be made whole, and had Faith ſo to be; and is not he as merciful and gracious (think you) now he is in Heaven? Does he not there at God's right hand *make interceſſion for us?* Meditate much upon the forgiving Attribute of God, whoſe Thoughts are as far above ours, as the *Heaven is higher than the Earth*. Let theſe, and the like Sayings ſink deep into your heart; for Diſtruſt and unbelieving Thoughts draw an ill Picture of God unto

unto us, who are not to behold him altogether in the Glaſs of our guilty Fears, nor liſten any more to ſuch Temptations as would weaken our confidence in God, than we ought formerly to have done wickedly by other inſtigations of the wicked One.

We muſt not ſtraiten God, nor ſet Bounds to his immenſe Goodneſs; for *this is the condemnation now, that Light being come into the World, Men ſtill love Darkneſs rather than Light*, and wink hard againſt it. Our Heart, in the multitude of its Thoughts, can never be enlarged enough to anſwer the Attribute of Mercy in God, ſo as to comprehend it, who has *Ways paſt our finding out*; wherefore *ſee that your Faith fail not*; and *pray that a door of hope may be always opened wide unto you*; and that this *Anchor of the Soul, ſure and ſtedfaſt*, may never deceive you; that your *Hope make you not aſhamed*; and be you ſure that if your Repentings begin to kindle in you, God will not *deſpiſe the day of ſmall things*; *he will not break a bruiſed Reed, nor quench ſmoaking Flax*; though *other Gods have had the rule over you*, and you have *played the harlot with many*; yet if you will now *make mention of his Righteouſneſs* only, *he will again receive you*; and though the *time paſt in which you wrought the Will of the Gentiles*, be long, and the time with you now, but ſhort, yet you muſt know, that with God *a thouſand years are but as one day, and one day as a thouſand years*; and God delighting to ſhew Mercy, the greater the Sin is to be forgiven, is he not the more delighted in the paſſing a gracious Act of Oblivion? I am ſure his Mercy is more magnified and exalted; and they to whom much is forgiven, will love the more; he then that knows his Name, (which you may read, as given by himſelf in the 34th. of *Exodus*,

dus, ver. 6, 7. Where 'tis proclaimed, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth, keeping Mercy for thouſands, forgiving Iniquity, and Tranſgreſſion, and Sin*) *will put his truſt in him; for this is his Memorial for ever*; and as is his Name, ſo is his Nature: Should he *enter into Judgment with his Servant, who might be juſtified?* Not only with his inveterate Enemies, but with ſome of the beſt of his true and faithful Servants, ſuch as *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*; they *ſhould not ſave themſelves by their own Righteouſneſs, if Judgment was laid to the Line; but there is Mercy with God, that he may be feared.* Wherefore let your Faith ſave you; and believe indeed as you confeſs, *the Forgiveneſs of Sins.*

A Sorrowful Spirit.

LET me recommend to you the Obſtinacy of Faith, and the Reliance on the Promiſes, a ſearching of your own Heart, and trying of your own Ways, an humble Confeſſion of your own Faults, and an hearty Contrition for the ſame; that ſo you worthily lamenting your Sins, and acknowledging your Wretchedneſs, may obtain perfect Remiſſion and Forgiveneſs, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Not but that there may ſtill afterward be a ſorrowful remembrance of Sin paſt: Thus 'tis ſaid of Saint *Peter*, That *when he heard a Cock crow*, he would weep; or kneeling down, ask pardon

don for his denying the Lord that bought him; yet if God *write bitter things againſt thee, making thee to poſſeſs thy former Sins*; acquaint now thy ſelf with him, & be at peace, Chriſt having *blotted out the Hand writing againſt us, nailing it to his Croſs*; though I know there may be ſome of ſo ſorrowful a Spirit, as to preſs down their Soul within them, bringing Leanneſs into it, as well as Drineſs into the Bones; ſuch, as ſometimes may ſcarce know why their Heart ſtoopeth or their Life ſo wanteth quickning in them, whoſe *ſighing cometh before they eat*, and who *mingle their drink with weeping*; whereas there may be no leſs Error in unprofitable Sorrow, and a vain miſtaken Grief, than in a falſe Joy.

'Tis as genuine for them that love God's Law, to have great Peace, as for the Wicked to be reſtleſs as the troubled Sea; it becometh as well the Juſt to be thankful, as the ungodly Sinners to howl upon their Bed, to lament and mourn ſorely, to be in heavineſs, and to help forward the Affliction, to roar for the very diſquietneſs of their heart; which, for them to do, may be a kind of rational pleaſure, or ſort of ſpiritual delight, to think that they are exerciſed in what is their abſolute and indiſpenſable Duty; for as in *the midſt of Laughter the Heart may be ſad*; ſo in tears there may be abundance of ſatisfaction and inward joy; the way to keep up which, from ſliding into unprofitable ſadneſs, is, whenever we rejoyce, to do it with *Reverence and godly fear*, to keep it, and our ſelves within due bounds, that being never exalted to any extravagancy, it may never ſink down into the other Extream, any thing that is unmanly. Though there be a time *for every purpoſe under Heaven*, a ſeaſon for every thing, as well *a time to weep, as a*

time

time to laugh; *a time to mourn*, as well as *a time to dance*; yet otherwiſe out of the courſe of theſe things, *go thy way, eat thy Bread with joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry heart*; (which is a *continual Feaſt*;) *let thy Garments be always white, and let thy Head lack no Ointment, live joyfully all the days of thy vanity*; *commend Mirth, becauſe a man hath no better thing under the Sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry*, Eccleſ. 8. 15. Wherefore let thy Light break forth as the Sun, though not like it, when from under a Cloud it only glances with a ſtreaming heat and brightneſs, that ſoon grows faint and languid again, going under another watery Billow; but let not thy Joy be darkened, ſince it is a great Bleſſedneſs, innocently and comfortably, to the Glory of God, to enjoy the Good of this Life in a full proportion, (if there may be ſaid to be any between them) for its part; to the Bliſs and Happineſs to be enjoyed by us hereafter eternally in another.

And unleſs, by the Sadneſs of the Countenance the Heart be made better; unleſs by the Houſe of Mourning, we underſtand profitable Sadneſs, or but Seriouſneſs only, rather than Dejectedneſs: And ſo on the other hand; except by making merry, be underſtood vain and ſinful Mirth, ſuch as evaporates in looſe Laughter, Lightneſs of Mind, Frothineſs, unſavoury, without Salt; might we not invert the Words of that Text, *Eccleſ.* 7. 4. and ſay rightly enough, *The Heart of the Fool is in the houſe of Mourning; but the Heart of the Wiſe is in the Houſe of Mirth?* For a chearful Temper is good to quicken us in the ways of Godlineſs, to make Chriſtianity ſit light and eaſie upon us, and to make us paſs off the Duties of it with an high reliſh and guſt, and to enlarge our Hearts in

Thank-

Thankfulneſs to God for the Bleſſings of his right hand and of his left.

So again, a melancholick, dull, leaden Temper, a ſullenly diſcontented, heavy Diſpoſition, is as an Iron Slumber upon the Soul and Spirit of a Man, ſtakes him down to the Earth, to grovel and play the Mad-man. Who indeed can be ſo lumpiſh, as not to rejoyce and again rejoyce, and rejoyce always in God his Saviour, that is ſufficiently ſenſible of thoſe times of refreſhing which ſhall come and overtake all true Believers, that do look for the Saviour of the World, and do patiently wait for him?

God threatens as a Judgment upon the Cities of *Judah*, and the Streets of *Jeruſalem*, *to take away the voice of Mirth, and the voice of Gladneſs, for their Sins ſake.* Indeed Mirth does not naturally flow from all men alike; but is rack'd and tortured, ſqueez'd out of ſome, who may live in it for the while, but as in ſtrong Convulſions; who, where they ſee need, do but force it; as the courſe of a River may by violence be turned, and made to drive on to the right hand or to the left. Thus may Men dreſs as with a white Garment, and tune themſelves like a Muſical Inſtrument, for a time, to give a pleaſant ſound; may, to affect others, put on a pleaſing Gayety of Mind or Humour, together with a ſprightly Look, or ſmooth Countenance, and only act ſuch a Scene of Jollity, as one on a Stage, may in few hours, divers and very different Parts, to entertain the Spectators, and be very little or nothing affected himſelf with the Paſſion he expreſſes outwardly, either of Joy, or Sorrow. So *deceitful is the heart of a Man, as that who can know it? For who can diſcern the thoughts, ſave the Spirit of a Man that is in him, and God, the*

ſearcher

ſearcher of the Heart, and tryer of the Spirit? So again, there may be many well diſpoſed in Body and Mind, ſtruck with a complacency and ſatisfaction which they do very much yet keep to themſelves; as though, like a Treaſure of great value, they did hide it from others, as they would a Jewel of great price, that ſeen or known more publickly, might be ſtollen, or raviſh'd away from them. So a full Spunge contains within it ſelf what it drinks in, as to make no more ſhew of its being filled, than if it ſtill remained empty. Thus the Heart knoweth its own bitterneſs, and a ſtranger doth not intermeddle with its joy.

There is great Prudence required in heavineſs; and if he be *wiſe, ſometimes to enter into ſuch an houſe as chief Mourner*; he had need be wiſe a ſecond time to know how to behave himſelf there; he that goes to the Houſe of Mourning, voluntarily goes without any invitation or bidding; let him take heed how he adopts Sorrow, making over all to it; how he dotes on, and fondly grows in love with it, leſt (as it was ſaid to be true of the Gods themſelves) it be not granted him at the ſame time to love, and to be wiſe: And unleſs a Man does love it, (which may ſeem very unnatural) what ſuch Beauty, Form, or Comelineſs can Men ſee in it, that for its own ſake any ſhould deſire it? Let it then be ſuch, at leaſt no more, than the rational Love of a Father towards his own Son, a Love not beyond all correction, if it once grow impetuous, or deformedly ridiculous, to be ſmiled at, and deſpiſed, to be taken down in its exorbitancy, and managed with decency and diſcretion, till it become more flexible and yielding, moulding it ſelf to every occaſion: For there may ſeem a Native Candor and in-bred Ingenuity in not troubling all the

the World with our own particular Grief, as by broaching it in all Companies, making them communicate with us in it; as though to divide it among them, to make each one bear his part and ſhare in it, who you may be ſure are like to have enough of their own peculiar. Wherefore a diſcreet Perſon will make great Provocations ſubmit to a Divine Mediocrity. And a Chriſtian ſhould have ſo much reſolution, be ſo much a Philoſopher, as in every particular occurrence, to keep on ſtill in his wonted courſe; at leaſt, never to ſuffer a ſtupifying, over-ruling dulneſs, to darken his Mind, ſhading the reaſon, as with a Cloud. It argues a narrow comprehenſion, to over-do one particular, and to be chained in Mind to it ſo, as not to be able to think of any matters beſide, that may intervene and call aloud for a due Portion of our Care to be beſtowed on them; this is to be drunk with Sorrow, or to be at our Wit's end. We muſt therefore be very cautious that we always have good hold of our ſelves, to repreſs a too active forwardneſs of Diſpoſition in us. Things ſhould be proportioned out to us, according to our individual Conſtitution, the better to ſuit with our Moral Temper, leſt we be afflicted all our Days, and the Sum Total of them be few and evil; or if our Life do wax old, it be but with heavineſs, and our Years with mourning. Thus we read of one that had ſo accuſtomed himſelf to Weepings, mingling them with his Prayers, that he was afterward glad to pray unto God for power over his own Tears to refrain them, who might elſe have been too unmerciful and cruel to his own Eyes; as we are told in the Primitive Church Hiſtory of him, who repenting, wept himſelf blind:

blind: Though indeed Holy *Ephræm*, that *Gregory Nyſſen* ſpeaks of, for his being as familiar with Weeping as other Men with Breathing; no Seaſon eſcaping him, in which he did not ſtrive to dry his Tears with Sighs, or provoke his Sighs by Tears, that by a mutual viciſſitude each might ſucceed and beget the other; (as though he would ſigh out his very Soul, or mean'd to ſhed it in Tears:) To his own Flebility, or power to Weep, he adds a Petition, makes it his Deſire, and articulate Wiſh, a matter of Requeſt, the very Subject of his Prayer, that God would take away Laughter from him, and grant him to be ſorrowful; though in his ſupplication he was pretty ſingular; trod the *Antipodes* to moſt Men, if not oppoſite to all: For how many Men that prize this Life enough in all Reaſon and Conſcience, if not a little too much, would part contentedly with ſome Portion of it, and compound with Death, take part of their Life for the whole; provided, that as their years were ſhortned in tract of time, ſo they might ſtill be otherwiſe ſhortned in the pleaſureable paſſing off; as if nothing under Sport, and the Delights of the Sons of Men, was ſo much with them as Vital Life: *To Morrow we die*, ſay they: Well, what is their Improvement then of their ſhort Life? Let us therefore Eat and Drink while we may, foraſmuch as in Death there is no more revelling; not but that there is a contrary extream, which likewiſe is not good; to wit, the Evil Spirit of Sadneſs and black Melancholy, the very dregs of Sorrow, and pith of Grief, that is bitter as Wormwood, and like Water of Gall, that feeds on broken Sleep, till it become fantaſtical, in ſuch a degree, as that the next remove is commencing

Madneſs. This is to hatch a Cockatrice's Egg, to warm and cheriſh a Snake in our Boſom; though a pondering Heart, a penſive Soul, may be captivated and taken, as with a delight, in a kind of ſolitary comfort, and arrive to that heighth (of Perfection, I dare not ſay,) as to reckon no pleaſure of any guſt or reliſh, but only the wild diſdain of all, without ſo much as a Parentheſis of Joy; yet Sorrow has its proper Lenitive; and a bruiſed Reed is elſe to be ſhattered with the Wind, when the ſtormineſs thereof is ſo loud as to ſuffer nothing elſe to be heard, which otherwiſe it would but play with, in the mighty ruſhings and wreſtlings thereof. And how delightful ſoever a ſick Soul's Solace in this kind may be; yet may not a dangerous repaſt be ſo unto a ſick Body? If melancholick Muſing for a time be ſweet; ſo may any loathſome Traſh be to ſome Diſtempers. 'Tis ſaid, that *Circe* the Sorcereſs, among her inchanted Cups, had one that was moſt ſweet, and that turned Men into Aſſes. To drink the Waters of Affliction, when not fed with the Bread of Adverſity; to mix and pour out unto our ſelves a bitter Cup; to ſigh, to ſit alone, to wring the Hands, to ſmite on the Thigh, and cry alas! Wo is me, I am undone, O my leanneſs, my leanneſs! To breed, then brood and foſter Grief, to brew Tears, to provoke and whet Sorrow, ſetting it an edge, to mingle it, till like ſtrong Drink it inflame and intoxicate, ſhewing it ſelf unmanly; to cenſure all Sons of Pleaſure as Wicked Men, and take delight in none but ſuch as do ſuch things as our ſorrowful ſelves: This is to Fetter the Soul, and to Cloyſter it up, to deaden its Faculties and Powers in the Operations thereof, to gag the Mind,

Mind, to cramp the whole Man: And this Temper, if indulged unto, will eat and prey upon the very Vitals, till it leave him an insipid Clod of Earth, only a terrour to himself; while he has scarce any sense remaining, but that of Pain; going *mourning all the Day long, like Rachel for her Children*, who did not only Mourn, (which might but become her,) but did also *refuse to be comforted*; (as if Grief did revenge inordinate Love, as to grieve excessively for the loss of any thing may seem to point out inordinate Love thereunto.) Though it is an evil thing and bitter to be stung and carry away the sting in us. We are told of a sort of Brutes, that being wounded with bearded Arrows, go their way presently and eat of that Herb which will drive them out.

As there are that will turn over business a-pace; so some will dispatch presently, what others, in matters of Trouble and Grief, may often expect the returns and tides of every Moon, whose Hearts are like soft or melting Wax within them, that retains one Impression but till another Seal be laid upon it; and the latter, be it never so deformed, if it be but a little pressing, takes place of the former; as one bitter Draught may spoil the relish of many sweet ones drank before: But we should be so affected with things, whether Joyous or Grievous, as not to be afraid to look back towards them, when they are passed and gone off: Which Changes are the more dangerous, not for the Changes themselves alone, but for the weakness and softness of Men's Minds or Bodies; a sound strong Body will endure the change of Heat and Cold in some extream, and an healthful Mind will play with what kills a Weakling; then too, un-

to ſome Men, ſuch and ſuch things are found to be more agreeable, and falling in with their temper, others more diſſonant; accordingly more or leſs ſcope and liberty is to be given, the Man more to be cloſetted and cloſely kept to them, or ſet looſe; at liberty ſome may manage themſelves beſt, others are better under reſtraint when charged with Sorrow, and Affliction grown to its full ſtature, tall and proportionably big; for ſome are apt to wind it up, that it might go the faſter: And as they who are given up to Pleaſure, are very unequal Judges in diſcerning what is meet, and what is exceſſive in themſelves, (being ſo bigotted to it;) ſo no leſs are others miſerably miſtaken in their meaſures of the ground they go upon, who think *they do well*, perhaps, *to be ſorrowful even unto Death.* When lothers, unmindful of the Affliction of *Joſeph*, whoſe Complexion of Mind is ſuch as to prompt them to lead their Life in ſuch a way, as though they were ſent into the World, like the *Leviathan* into the Waters, to take their paſtime therein, and to meaſure whole Days and Nights by ſports only, can laugh at the other's miſtake, who yet pity them in theirs.

The Truth is, our Paſſions and Appetites, our Joy and Sorrow, and the Deſires of our Soul, were not given us to be an hindrance in the ways of Godlineſs; to diſtemper and ruffle, to allure or entice out of the right way, or boiſterouſly blow us back again; but to further and help our Progreſs rather, to accelerate our Motion, to quicken our Pace, preſſing us forward with the greater ardency to the price of our High Calling; being inſtead of Wings to the Soul, or like Sails when moderately fill'd with a brisk gale, carrying Men

forward

forward by their help, towards the Haven where they would be; and therefore they are to be moderated accordingly, in order to this Great and Noble End, the Salvation of our Souls: For the Natural Life may ſo work upon the Spiritual One, as that Indiſpoſition of Body, may cauſe Indiſpoſition and Diſorder in the Mind, putting that out of Frame: The clogging of the Animal Spirits with too great a Weight, may ſo hinder the Operations of the Soul, and deaden the Spirit, as to overcome with Drowzineſs and Lethargick Sleep; now when we are *ſorely amazed*, and *very heavy*, *exceeding ſorrowful*, our buſineſs is not ſo much (if at all) to Examine and Judge, but to Truſt; not to determine, ſo much as to ſtay our ſelves upon God, though we walk in Darkneſs and ſee no Light: The way to cauſe which to ariſe and ſhine upon us, (the Natural means I would be underſtood to ſpeak of, which God does uſually ſuffer to obtain the proper Ends thereof,) is to unbend the Mind and Thoughts, (which like a Cloud have darken'd what raiſed them,) to afford our ſelves natural refreſhment, and innocent (not to ſay neceſſary) enjoyments of this Life, properly belonging to the Body; foraſmuch as the *Fleſh is weak*, and cannot be fed with Spiritual Food alone, ſo as to ſubſiſt thereon, be the *Spirit never ſo willing*; neither can it be recreated and refreſhed with nothing but Spiritual Exerciſe and Imployments; and as he is a fooliſh Mower that Mows all Day and never whets his Scyth, becauſe he would loſe no time; ſo, is not that as fooliſh Melancholick Sadneſs, that drinks up abundance of ours as unprofitably?

And if ſome think the Wiſe Man ſets himſelf to declaim againſt Mirth, to ſtop the Voice thereof, as though coming to nothing, ſaying, *What doth it?* If any think he goes about to reſtrain Laughter, ſaying, the wiſe man is ſcarce ſeen to ſmile a little; or in another place, ſhutting it up as *mad*, lifting up his Voice againſt it, branding it ignominiouſly with a Note of Folly, when ſtormy and tempeſtuous as an Hurricane; muſt more calm and temperate Rejoycings anſwer for that? Though what Redargution in the loudeſt Laughter, the greateſt and moſt noiſie expreſſions of Mirth, as of intrinſick Evil? But the Preacher in ſuch Texts is very divine, and may ſpeak in the perſon of ſuch an one, ſhewing the ſpiritual Advantages of Seriouſneſs, and turning our Eyes into our ſelves; as alſo (upon ſuch a through view of our ſelves) of being touch'd in heart for our own corruptions; perhaps he had alſo paſſed the lighter Joys, ſo that their Verdure ceaſed in him; and if he ſpake at all perſonally, he might have ſuch Chriſtian Cauſes of Mourning, as many good men have not, who yet could even wiſh their *Head was Water, and their Eyes Fountains of Tears, that they might weep day and night* for their Sins; ſo that the Souls of men lying always at ſtake, the Preacher might think it but fit to cauſe us from a ſenſe of our own hazardous condition both of Soul and Body, to come to a ſerious conſidering of our own ways, to deſcend into our ſelves, to ſearch out own Hearts, and not altogether run giddily after Pleaſure and vain Delights. Not but that we are to ſerve God chearfully for the abundance of all things, leſt he perform his threatning Promiſe of cauſing to ſerve Enemies in as great want of all, that

that we knew not how to uſe, to make the voice of his Praiſe to be glorious; or that knowing, we refuſed to worſhip him as ſo merciful a Creator, and bountiful Benefactor for; and does not *Eccleſiaſtes* preach up *Mirth?* Which is no light, but ſolemn way of teaching it; which, although it has the [real] commendation, as well as the good word of many, is more credited by that verbal Teſtimony of the Preacher, bearing witneſs to the excellency thereof, than by the loud Acclamations joyned with the Teſtimony of a great many other Men's Practices bearing witneſs to the ſame, in their Life and Actions, when they ſtrangle the enjoyment ſometime in it ſelf, & it ceaſes to be with it after its wonted manner, the edge being turned with too much whetting, the ſharpneſs and poinancy gone, becoming dull, flat, and inſipid, without any reliſh, when run on the dregs, and they come to ſuck them out; if Men's *Knees* (like *Belſhazzar*'s) *ſmite each other*, or but their Hearts ſmite them in the midſt of Banquetting: We know that there is no true Mirth, where there is not inward Peace of Conſcience, be the outward appearance of it as gay as it will.

Severe Joy is a divine thing, and to know how to pay that Chriſtian Duty owing to God and our ſelves, to be skilful to uſe our Chriſtian Liberty in the uſe of all the good Creatures of God, and enjoyment of our ſelves therein; that God may not loſe the Acknowledgment and Praiſe of that Mercy, we might otherwiſe loſe the comfort and due ſenſe of, is to know how to be followers of that which is good; and the Goodneſs thereof will appear the more, if illuſtrated by the hurtfulneſs of things contrary, in a cynical, moroſe

temper, cenſuring all that live more happily, in greater eaſe & plenty, growing diſcontented, envious, and repining at God's good Providence, being ill affected, and of an evil eye, becauſe he is good; as though revenging other men's happineſs on its tormenting ſelf; I ſay, the commendableneſs of a thankful and chearful heart (and take heed Unthankfulneſs does not breed Unholineſs and Vexation of Spirit, and many Infirmities both Ghoſtly and Bodily) is ſeen ſtill more plainly, when compared with rebellious Murmurings and Diſcontent, as if God had done nothing for us, in which we might rejoyce, or was ſuch an hard Maſter, that his Service was perfect Slavery, rather than perfect Freedom; which brings moſt Glory to God, the *coming before his preſence with a Song, yea, and rejoycing before him with Thanksgiving*; (who is far above all our Praiſe, and it is gracious in him to accept it at our hands,) or darkneſs of Thoughts, an iron Brow, and ſullen Sadneſs? Which latter, howe'er it may to all infected with it (for I muſt count it for a Diſeaſe, or at leaſt our own Infirmity,) yield a pleaſing Sweetneſs, and afford a kind of Delight; yet then ſuch as a ſort of Serpent is ſaid to kill with, making Men ſtung, to love its Enchantments; for does not bodily Sorrow work Death? And then if the Soul taking its flight, carries its Habits, and Diſpoſitions, its Qualities, and Affections along with it, how will it, unleſs the heavenly Work was begun and fitted here, be acceptable or ſuiting, welcome or agreeable Company for the Choire of Saints and Angels, and all the heavenly Hoſt, to ſing perpetual Anthems and Hallelujahs to God in Heaven, that was never uſed to any ſuch Employ-

ments

ments here on Earth, but only to be dull and lifeleſs, beneath the dignity of our Quality, who are the King's Sons, Heirs of God? What a ſtrange Change muſt there then be, before they go hence, (if Heaven muſt be begun upon Earth) in thoſe who are ſeldom ſeen to appear before the more immediate preſence of the Divine Majeſty, unleſs it be to ſhew him of their trouble? Whoſe ſouls are generally miſerably out of tune to ſing unto God with the voice of Thanksgiving, who loves a chearful Receiver as well as a chearful Giver; and among thoſe that bring Preſents unto him, he is delighted with a chearful Thanksgiver; for he that offereth him ſuch an Offering, honoureth him; and ſuch he will delight to honour, ſhewing the Salvation of God.

Now as the firſt ſtep towards Vertue, is to be freed from Vice; ſo it is a kind of commencing a Degree, or advancing a Form in the School of good Temper, to have ſhaken hands with Sadneſs.

I know there are always Vanities enough; but *he that obſerves the Wind, ſhall not ſow; nor he that regards the Clouds, reap.* For ought I know, the Argument of all being Vanity, if well improved, may make for Mirth; one of that pair of Philoſophers might ſeem to think ſo, who is ſaid to have laughed always at the Vanity of things here below, as though he thought to laugh it out of countenance; but when God turns our Captivity, or ſhews ſome ſignal Mercy, why ſhould not our Mouth be filled with Laughter, as well as our Tongue with Joy?

Some that are driven out from the Society of Men, by natural inclination, or other reſtraint upon them, like *Nebuchadnezzar*, have as it were, their

their Underſtanding return unto them, are renewed ſtrangely in Mind and Humour, in Boldneſs, Sagacity, and Wit, in Countenance, in Air, and Behaviour among Men, when once the Tongue is looſed, by what uſes to untie it, moderate repletion of the Body with the good things of this Life; and the Man begins to wonder at the enlargement of himſelf, ſo ſtaked down before to the Earth; marvels at the infuſion of a new Soul, as it were, breathed into him, who before was as dead while living, and his Body but as the Soul's Sepulchre, while his Eyes were ſet, and a dead paleneſs overſpread his ſtudied Face, and ſtarch'd Countenance, till as Iron ſharpeneth Iron, ſo the Countenance of his Friend, the Man; quickening his Wit, enlivening his Underſtanding in the inveſtigation of Truth, imbelliſhing his Soul by a pleaſanter improvement than a voluminous, bookiſh Retirement, which is a wearineſs of the Fleſh, howe'er a deceivable one ſometimes, as by a Cheat put upon a Man's ſelf, kept his own cloſe Priſoner in Mind, as well as Body, ſhut and lock'd up as between two Walls, holden as in a Spell, a ſecret, inviſible, but powerful Charm, linked to thoſe cloſe companions, going hand in hand, *much Wiſdom*, and *much Grief*, Eccleſ. 1. 18. and to the *encreaſing Knowledge*, with the *encreaſe of Sorrow*. Whereas it is Scriptural [Advice] at the leaſt, (and *every Word of God is pure*, Prov. 30. 5.) to *give wine to thoſe that are of heavy hearts, that they might drink and forget* (though not themſelves, yet) *their Miſery*, which is great upon earth. And howe'er the heavy-hearted may partake but in the leaſt ſhare of what was made to *make glad the heart of Man*; yet ſuch revivings and renewing of the Spi-

rits,

rits, when weary and fainting, may be as proper, as Food to the hungry, or Phyſick to the ſick. *Wine maketh merry*, ſays *Eccleſiaſtes*; as though, while on Earth, while in the Vale of Miſery and Tears, there muſt be ſome violence offered to a Man's Nature, to remove Sorrow from his heart, and ſomething to extort, ſomething to provoke and force a Mirth. *Wine* [*maketh*] *merry*, Eccleſ. 10. 19. And our Lord, the ſorrowful occaſion of whoſe coming into the world you know very well, and whoſe Buſineſs was ſuch, as to cauſe him to be intimately *acquainted with grief*, whoſe holy Example no man need ſcruple to follow (but one that weighs every thing by ſcruples) in his ordinary converſation, and free behaviour and carriage, as well as ſtrict and ſevere Holineſs of Life, being called to a Feaſt, with his Diſciples, went and grac'd it; and when they wanted Wine, though perhaps they had drank out what was thought ſufficient to have been prepared, or pretty freely, as may ſeem by the Sacred Story, where the Bridegroom is commended for having kept the good Wine till that time, in which others uſed to put Men off with that which is worſe; namely, when they have well drunk; even then, though he was no Wine-bibber, nor Friend to ſuch Sinners, as ſome may however count it Friendſhip, to maintain them in their Riotouſneſs, much leſs to promote it among any; yet did begin to work a Miracle to ſupply the want; and ſo plentiful did he make it, that ſix Stone-Ciſterns, containing two or three Firkins a piece, filled to the Brim, did wonderfully pour out Wine, as the ſtony Rock once did Water; though the very Law it ſelf, that is to regulate all, is ſubject to great Abuſes,

and

and ſo is Abſtemiouſneſs too. When *Plato* had ſeen *Dionyſius* making two Meals, he went and reported in *Athens*, that he ſaw nothing in *Sicily*, but a Monſter, that did feed twice before the Sun was ſet.

Such might be the roughneſs and ſeverity, even of the poliſhed and refined Nature of ſome of the *Heathen Philoſophers*, as though they thought every thing almoſt entring into the Man (beſide what was neceſſary to keep up the Union of Soul and Body, that the Nice Gueſt inhabiting therein, might not upon ſome diſtaſt deſert the Tenement, leaving it irrepairable, an inſipid Clod of Earth mouldring to Corruption) did defile him.

This was indeed blind enough for *Heathen*; but *Chriſtian Philoſophy* is erected on better Principles, laid on a ſurer Foundation.

And how can we think God would have made ſo many of his good Creatures, as Supernumerary to the neceſſity of Man's Life and Being, ſerving rather for delight than juſt barely for maintenance, had he envyed the enjoyment, or forbid him to touch or to taſt? Or at firſt have placed Man in a Garden of Pleaſure, allowing (if not commanding) him to eat of every Tree ſave one? As though reſerving ſuch a Royalty only, though Man does not live only for to Eat, but for an higher and much nobler End.

And after all theſe Helpers of our Joy, that may ſeem the moſt true and genuine, that proceeds of temper, without being rack'd from the Heart. And ſometimes to counterfeit Joy in the ways of Mirth, may be a greater puniſhment than to have a contrary Humour take its own courſe, till the Waters abating it goes down and is ſpent:

For

For what pleaſureable Communion hath Light with Darkneſs? Of which two, where one prevails, 'tis time for the other to be gone, to withdraw; or there is but a puzzling Light maintain'd and kept up, by ſuch a ſtrife between them: But take heed, that at the moſt they do then but ſucceed each other in a beautiful and comely order, like Day and Night; that heavineſs, fitly compared to Darkneſs, in which Men are apt to go wrong, endure but for a Night, a proper ſeaſon only, and that Joy comes to take place in the Morning: For is not Joy indeed Grief's Elder Brother? Nothing but Sin brought Sorrow into the World, that Midwifed it in: And upon what therefore is Sorrow rightly placed, but to carry Sin out? Man was made Lord of things below, not to be ſubject to the Power of any things preſent, or things to come, or things paſt and gone; for 'tis a ſign we loved that with an inordinate and undue affection, which we bemoan and lament the loſs of, with inordinate affliction.

To err in hoping well, may be more ſafe and profitable, than to err in fearing evil, eſpecially when a meer Imaginary one, may make really miſerable, if not alſo be more intolerable to a corrupted fancy, than what has its weight from its own Nature and true Exiſtence; and it may be more hardly removed (and they comforted who have caſt themſelves under the burden of it) than other Calamities; becauſe the root of the Diſeaſe is from within, an erring Judgment; and Errour to one in Errour, appears like Truth to one in Truth, if not alſo as ſtrongly affecting.

Now though the deep things of a Man are ſo like the Winds, that thou canſt not tell whence they

they come, or whither they tend; yea, ſo more than like them for ſecrecy, that thou heareſt no ſound thereof in thine Ears, thoughts tread ſo light: Yet any thing almoſt is eaſilier to be ſhun'd than a Man's own Heart, which if tryed to be raked up and ſmothered in it ſelf, is like Fire in his Bones pent in; and while the Heart is ſo hot and glowing within, 'tis pain and grief to keep ſilence, and a kind of eaſe to complain perhaps, though but to the mercileſs Rocks and Winds; and what Man therefore is required always to give his own Senſe and Perception the Lye, the better to deceive others, as with an Untruth? Wherefore, though there be a great deal of Chriſtian fortitude in the patient enduring grief, (though perhaps needleſs grief, and ſo ſuffering wrongfully;) yet, though the World be not troubled or acquainted with it, ſome of which might diſingenuouſly deride, or diſeſteem for: A Faithful Friend, one appointed by God Almighty to comfort his People, to pour Words anointed with Oyl into wounded Hearts, and to compoſe, and ſet in frame the broken and ſhattered Spirits of his contrite ones, may be conſulted; that *the Spirit of the Lord may be upon, as being anointed to Preach the Goſpel to the Poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of ſight to the Blind, to ſet at liberty thoſe that are bruiſed*, Luke 4. 18. Who at the leaſt may be bound (if not under pain of ſinning againſt the Lord *to pray without ceaſing for you alſo*, and the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much) to have Compaſſion; and very pity alone, though uncompanied with any other relief, may ſeem a kind of one.

However, as Men that are Sick, have diſcharged their

their Duty, when having firſt ſought the Lord, they alſo, though unſucceſsfully, ſeek after the Phyſician: So a weary or heavy laden Soul, when having ſought after God, and ſtill continuing like St. *Paul, to pray unto him:* It uſes the proper means of Ghoſtly Comfort from ſome Phyſician of Souls; when in darkneſs or error it prays God not to let it go wrong out of the ways of his Commandments and asks counſel of thoſe *whoſe lips are to preſerve knowledge, and the people to ſeek the Law at their mouth, as from Meſſengers of the Lord of Hoſts*, Mal. 2. 7. As though ſo divine a Sentence was to be in their Lips that their Mouth ſhould not tranſgreſs in Judgment: And who ſo likely to know the Mind of Chriſt, (though none can ſpeak to the Heart but God only,) as thoſe that ſpend their time all the Day long in the ſtudy of it, as delivered by his own Mouth, or dictated by the Holy Ghoſt, to thoſe Secretaries or Pen-men, to be perpetuated to all Generations? *That through Patience and Comfort of that Holy Word, Men might imbrace and ever hold faſt the Bleſſed Hope of everlaſting Life, which God has given us in Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* For Man is born to Trouble, (as though to exerciſe his Patience, and to ſtand in need of that comfort,) as naturally as the Sparks fly upward.

But yet though ſome of us might write a whole Book of *Lamentations* with the Prophet *Jeremiah*; and though Grief be ready enough to ſhew it ſelf and make it ſelf known to the World in complaint, there may be many that weep for themſelves, whoſe Eyes run down in ſecret, for the ſame Unhappineſs or Infirmities, which ſome may however think ſtrange, and themſelves alone infeſted with; whereas there is no Temptation taketh any, but what

what is common to all Men, ſo as that others may be tempted in like manner; and many times the ſame or greater afflictions than what we account appropriate and peculiar to our ſelves alone, may be accompliſhed in our Brethren that are in the World; ſo unequal Judges are we of one another's Happineſs or Infelicity, not knowing the frame of another's Heart, which in Men is ſo different, that one may count that for a conſiderable part of another's Happineſs, which if he could look into his Breaſt he would pity him for; and that may be the imbittering of all the reſt, which the World may look at in him with an envious Eye, though it knows not the Spirit or hidden Things of the Man, and though there be no ſuch true Joy (or Sorrow either) that does not proceed from the Heart.

There may alſo be many that would pity others in their Affliction, who would yet envy them in their greater Proſperity; though it be a Chriſtian part, as Members one of another, to ſympathize with each other, ſo as to rejoice with thoſe that do rejoice, as well as a Goſpel rule *to mourn with them that mourn, and weep with them that weep.* And it may be more rational contentment, if not pleaſure, to a Man, to think he is duly touch'd with a Fellow-feeling of another's Miſery, joyn'd with a deſire to free him from it, (as one concerned for another's Evil, will, if but to relieve his own Bowels of Compaſſion, endeavour to rid him of it,) than to rejoice at Men's Tribulation, trying to ſmother all tenderneſs of Nature ſtirring in him, hardning it till it become brawny and callous without Natural Affection; for what Man, without great violence to himſelf, can maintain the ſame ſtate of Mind amidſt the Glory of a Court;

and

and the ſhrieks, the violent out-crys, and unutterable groans of an Hoſpital?

Again, take heed of Spiritual Sloth; gird up the Loyns of your Mind; for it may ſeem frowardneſs to lie groaning under what may, by warrantable means be ſhaken off. May'ſt thou be made free? Uſe it rather, and beware of Spiritual Blindneſs; for if the Priſon Doors be ſet open for thy eſcape; yet if thine Eyes be not open'd alſo to ſee thy Salvation, thou wilt remain ſtill as bound, when only ſtraitned in thine own thoughts; and Men may die of meer fancy: Thus the Woman trembled after ſhe was looſed from her Infirmity, and made perfectly whole: Thus a Vapour incloſed in the Bowels of the Earth, may ſometimes cauſe it to tremble and quake greatly, which the Winds could not in the leaſt move; and though every one does not always carry a Map of their Mind in their Foreheads, for us to ſee any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up in them, though we cannot perceive every Diſtemper Men carry about them, and wear as a daily Cloathing, or as a Girdle hard girding them about, that like Oyl may ſlily inſinuate it ſelf into their Bones, and divide between the Joynts and Marrow, hid like the Blood running round the Man in continued Motion and Circulation, unſeen as ſhut up in the Veins; (thus a Muſical Inſtrument looks as well untun'd; as skilfully tuned; but if touch'd and ſtruck upon, is very inharmonious and jarring.) Though we cannot ſee the Gout racking and torturing in the extream parts of the Body; yet does it follow therefore the Man is at perfect eaſe and well? Whether we behold ſo much as a dejection of Spirit, or the leaſt inquietude, as there may be thoſe who delight in ſuch

deceiveableneſs as an Innocent Hypocriſie, who yet ſleep and their Heart waketh, may be only through ſome falſe Imputation, or their own unjuſt attributing to themſelves ſuch things as they never were guilty of, or by reaſon of God's making their Heart ſoft, though the Refiner hath skill to proportion the heat of the Fire, only to purifie, and not burn up: But if it be any worldly Affliction that cauſeth the Heart to ſtoop, conſider how that we bear our part only of the Burden of Humane Life, laid upon all in common; and it might be fanſifully thought that if every Man's trouble could be brought and laid on an heap together, in order to an equal diſtribution thereof to every one alike; many, if not moſt Men, would chooſe to take up their own Bundle of Cares, or Burden of Afflictions, rather than ſubmit to an equal ſhare to every individual Perſon; and yet are not ſome over-whelmed with Sorrow upon Sorrow? As others with exceſſive Joy may be ſwallowed up, ſo as to be overcome and loſt in ſuch a Spring-tide thereof, running over its Banks.

Thus *Diagoras*, ſeeing his three Sons Conquerors in the *Olympick Games*, is ſaid preſently to have died; and the like is ſaid of the *Lacedæmonian*, *Chilo*, imbracing his Son with Joy, newly crown'd for ſuch a Victory; and thus alſo we are told, that *Phiſtion Nicæus*, the Comical Poet, died with Laughter, going off the Stage of Humane Life in ſuch an unuſual manner: But we ſhould rather be of ſo even a Spirit, as never to be over-ſurprized with ſudden Fear, or killing Joy, letting in too faſt upon us: There is too a Natural ſenſitive Joy or Rejoycing, when poſſibly we no more know why we are more than ordinarily pleaſant, than others

others are able to give a rational Account why they are ſo caſt down. And as there is a Spiritual Joy in God, in the Light of his Countenance, his Face and Favour, in the Pardon of our Sins, his good Providence towards our Souls, and the like: So alſo may we rejoyce ſpiritually in things Temporal, and this is an high Act of Grace, and the pleaſures and delights of the Mind do mightily exceed thoſe of the Body; for the more Noble the Faculty is, the more capable of delight, and ſupernatural ones, ſuch as the pleaſures of Faith and Obedience, excel thoſe of the Natural Mind, as much, or more than they do bodily ones: And though it may ſeem Natural to deſire and covet ſuch earneſtly as ſome of the beſt Gifts; yet if God does pleaſe to ſtop the current of ſuch Divine Favours as might refreſh our Souls when weary, (for in him it is that all our freſh Springs are) we ſhould get us to him right humbly, with ſubmiſſion to his Wiſdom, (who knows better what is good for us, than we our ſelves) leaving it wholly to his own courſe, do good in thy good pleaſure; bind, cut, and burn, (ſays he) that thou mayeſt ſpare me to Eternity; ſend what thou wilt upon me, ſo thou enable me to bear it; and indeed 'tis all one, whether our Burden be lighten'd, or we ſtill more enabled with new ſupplies of adventitious ſtrength, to quit our ſelves like Men; for it is not *what*, but *how* thou Beareſt. The Devil may ſuffer more of God's Wrath, than we are capable of ſtanding under; but that is nothing to the making of him better; but may be the occaſion of blackening him ſtill more, if it cauſe him to blaſpheme; the ſuffering of Grief does not mend us; ſo far from making us perfect, without it be ſanctified,

fied, cauſing us to conſider our own ways *till we return unto the Lord*; elſe, to be ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted by his heavy Hand, preſſing us ſorely: Would not this tend naturally to make us love him the leſs, and to revolt ſtill more and more? According to that Fable of *Poggius*, where the Ghoſtly Father coming to a Citizen that had been long afflicted with grievous Sickneſs, among others, is made to give him theſe Words of Comfort and Conſolation, *That God was wont to ſcourge thoſe whom he loved:* to which, the Sick Perſon ignorantly and unbecomingly enough replies, *It is no wonder then that he has ſo few Friends; and if this be the Method and Courſe he takes with them, is like to have fewer ſtill.* Now this might be very much the Senſe and Language of corrupted Nature, where not mitigated, allay'd, and ſweetned, by the Grace of God's Holy Spirit, ſanctifying all our Trouble, and Sorrow, and Travel.

The afflicting Trouble of ſome, and thoſe too eminently good, may ſtick by them, continue long upon them, though they try to give vent to their ſorrow, by clearing of themſelves, as the Heavens when black, which empty their cloudy Bottles, pouring Rain upon the Earth: But does not much Rain cauſe more? For there is the more Vapour to ariſe and aſcend again to embody in another cloudy Pillar.

Thus ſome Afflictions may run circular, and like bodily Diſeaſes, remove, or turn from one Malady to another, leſt ſome tender part of the Soul ſhould be too much affected, as the Body may with a continued undiſturbed pain or grief, gnawing always at the ſame place. And it may be with Sorrow as with bodily Diſeaſes and Sickneſſes, there are

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ſome acute and ſharp ones, cruel and fierce for a while, till their Venome be ſpent; ſo vigorous, whilſt upon a Man, that they laſt not, but are over in a few days or hours; for either the Diſeaſe departs from him, or by its ſtrength and raging fierceneſs diſpatches him, and makes an end of him upon Earth. There are again laſting and lingering Diſtempers, which, though perhaps they do not ſo ſenſibly ſhorten the days of the Poſſeſſors and Inheritors of them, (ſo mild and gentle;) yet hang about them and accompany them to the Grave; ſuch a difference is there in afflictions of another Nature, Penſiveneſs, Sadneſs, and benumbing Grief; one, like the violent Fits of ſome hot Diſtemper, or like a Summer's ſudden wreſtling Storm, is followed with the ſucceſſion of a more moderate and natural heat, a ſofter calm, ſerenity, and clearneſs; others there may be of a quite different Nature, growing Troubles, that improve upon a Man with increaſe, that if by force they be a little diverted, keep their natural toughneſs ſtill, (as Steel may be made to bend, but ſcarce to ſtand bent;) of this ſort are they which cohabit and dwell with a Man, lie down with him, when he ſays his Couch ſhall eaſe his Complaint, which abide day after day, and year after year; and they whom they imbrace, are in proceſs of time killed thereby, like ſturdy Oaks, with the twining Ivy, though much weaker in its ſelf, and its own Nature.

Thus ſome may ſeem, like a Tree that is blaſted with ſome malign Influence, or as we ſay, Thunderſtruck, which may appear outwardly gay, may ſometimes put forth; but if look'd into, being decay'd and not ſound at Heart, whatſoever Fruit it

bears, may be found languid. Some Tempers may ſeem to want Allay, like *Saturn*, in it ſelf a dull heavy Planet to be born under; but if well dignified, or in conjunction with another, it may be the beſt, inclining to a due Mean and Moderation in our Actions and Behaviour, a mixture of Sobriety to correct, and as Ballaſt to counterpoiſe the Mind's levity and wantonneſs: And as the blunter the Knife, the more ſtrength muſt be put to make it uſeful; ſo the more frozen Thoughts and duller Diſpoſitions ſhould put themſelves forth and exert the Powers of their Souls, putting them in act by an Holy Violence, or their darker Hearts may ſo dull their Spiritual Senſes, as that they ſhall not be able to exerciſe them aright to diſcern between Good and Evil; but leſſen greater Sins, and magnifie ſmaller, and call things that are not as though they were; and cauſe not only to remember ſorrowfully Sins repented of, but alſo with a perplexing fear and dread, as if God Almighty had not, neither would forget them.

And as for outward Afflictions, Are Men's Groans innocent, where their groaning is heavier than their ſtroke? Is it not as contrary to right Reaſon, as it is to thoſe Sons of Pleaſure, who would have to Morrow much more abundant in Delight, as ſome may deſire it might abound in Lamentation, and Mourning, and Woe; in deſpight of thoſe Words, *When Heavineſs has endured for a Night*, to refuſe to be comforted in the Morning, and through very anguiſh of Heart unprofitably to wiſh it was again Evening? As if we were Jealous of our own Eaſe and Quiet; whereas we might try to make the Earth a Temporal Paradiſe, and a repreſentation (though but a weak and faint reſemblance) of an Eternal

Eternal One in the Heavens above. And after all our endeavours to ſweeten Humane Life, there will ſtill be bitterneſs enough, though we do not help forward the Affliction and give a ſting to it; and Days of Darkneſs enough, though we do not follow hard after what too faſt purſues, and ſometimes overtaking, lays ſuch hold upon Men, as that they are ſcarce able to look up comfortably, (the very Light of the Sun in a great degree ceaſing to be pleaſant to them;) *coming upon them as an armed Man, or like a mighty ruſhing Wind,* a violent Storm and Hurricane of Woe, in amazing and benumbing, not ſpeaking Troubles, ſtupifying, as though (like the Fabulous *Niobe*) petrefying with Grief, when Tears ſtand congealed, and fain would, but cannot flow, to refreſh, as with ſeaſonable Rain in time of Drought, Men's drooping Spirits.

If we would be Bleſſed in the very deed, we ſhould, when as ſorrowing, be yet not altogether unlike thoſe that rejoyce; and then as *Petrus Damianus* calls them, *Tears may be Spiritual Delights, pleaſantly watering thirſty Souls, refreſhing parched and ſcorched Hearts.* And though our Tears are thickened with the defilements of Fleſh and Spirit, and not like our Lord's, who had done all things well, and whoſe Weepings were *as pure Water from the Living Fountain*: Yet when as in an Alembick riſing from the Heart hot within, through Godly Sorrow and Compunction, they do diſtil from the Eyes; theſe are kept in his Bottle, and ſhall petrefie as ſo many Diamonds to be ſet in an Immortal Crown of Glory reſerved in Heaven for us. But though *Petrus Cellenſis* ſays, *One Tear is able to break the Gates of Hell, and to queneh the Flames there-*

of, to overcome the Invincible, to bind the Omnipotent; and it was said the Devil can better endure his own Torments, than abide Men's Tears; yet then understand Penitential Ones, not when Sin is but the mix'd cause of Men's trouble, or rather the least spring of such over-flowings. And then again, if these troubled Waters be never so sanative; yet a Plaster that being applied to a sore might heal it, may, if laid where no Sore is, make one: And though Sin, which is threatned with punishment, may for Christ's sake be pardoned, when Men punish themselves for it, taking an Holy Revenge, as though to prevent God's Judgment, by judging, condemning, and inflicting of Wrath; yet it may be a kind of injustice to our selves, to make us, if innocent of the like offences, to undergo the very same sorrow and vexation of Spirit, that is required of such as need to have a new kind of one wrought in them. May it not seem unreasonable for those who have the least cause, of all others to be more conversant with the exercising of themselves in acts of sorrow, to be most excessive in such acts? And though true repentance, may scarce perhaps in strictness ever be too great, if prudently managed; yet it may be such, if unskilful, as to carry it self out into some circumstances almost to be repented of: For though this be a means God has appointed, should in Christ Jesus our Lord, be our restorer, if not also the rectifyer of Men's Lives and Actions; yet misguided zeal therein may be very indiscreet, intemperate, and ridiculous, as to fast to fantasticalness and delusion.

And as the With, which is very useful and serviceable in the binding and keeping uniform toge-

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ther in one, what would otherwiſe ſtraggle and lie very diſorderly, if left looſe to it ſelf, is yet the moſt diſorderly piece of all to be compoſed, to be made ſtrait and regular: So may the very Corrector of ſome Men's miſcarriages, their Repentance I mean, be ſometimes the moſt extravagant and uncouth piece almoſt of all their Life, whoſe indiſpoſition of Soul, ariſing partly from that of their Body, will not ſo well admit of diving into their own Heart, without a cramping fear, and an horrible glance of a turned Conſcience giddying it ſelf in its own revolutions. And many may be divers years, like that Woman in the Goſpel, *Luke* 13. 11. ſo faſt bound, as to be held *bowed together with a Spirit of Infirmity*, and no more able to lift up themſelves than ſhe was, or at leaſt not exerting their Power, that may yet by a Word in ſeaſon, luckily ſpoken, be healed of ſuch their Infirmity, or looſed from it; as it may ſeem, that Woman, though *Satan* had bound her eighteen years, had Faith enough in her to be made ſtrait. *Wherefore comfort ye my People, ſaith the Lord, ſay to them that are of a fearful Heart, be ſtrong, fear not, behold your God will come and ſave you, then the Eyes of the Blind ſhall be opened, everlaſting joy ſhall be upon their Heads, and ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away*, Iſa. 35. I know there may be a weakneſs, as ſome may call it, a proneneſs in Old Age, to ſorrow and heavineſs; and therefore it is, perhaps, that a Juvenile Temper, a younger Humour and Habit of Mind is held ſo becoming it, ſo mightily accounted of and approved as more than ordinarily excellent: For although the Duties of Chriſtianity are ſerious, and we are dayly to be converſant in them, though we are to pray without

without ceasing, never to be utterly unbent and out of frame; I mean, though to have God always in our thoughts, never to forget him in our mirth; I would be understood, though to be exercised in Holy Duties of Religion, to be chasten'd with Fasting, to wean our own Souls and keep them low, again to lift them up unto God, and to walk always as in his sight; yet not morosely and peevishly to condemn, as out of ill will, and to darken all Joy, drawing a veil over it, and to stop the Voice of both the Result and Promoter of Health *in the Dwellings of the Righteous*, and wholly to take away the Portion of Men here under the Sun in all their Labours; for our Souls should *magnifie the Lord, praise him for all his Goodness, and our Spirits* ought *to rejoice in God our Saviour*, our Hearts to Dance for Joy: For Religion does not consist in Sorrow altogether, notwithstanding there be a Godly one; and considering it separate and a-part, distinct by its self alone, How can it be so acceptable to God, that delights not in our Christian Austerities, farther than to make us conformable to Christ; but delights rather in the prosperity of his Servant, and that does not willingly grieve the Children of Men; for his Faithful Ones to make Grief their Motto, and to write it between their Eyes, and on their Foreheads, that he who runs may read it there? How can it be well pleasing, out of Temper only and Inclination, rather than Sense of Duty; to call Sorrow a Delight, and to be cruelly Mad, and inhumanely set against our selves? And though Godly Sorrow should work carefulness and revenge, and we may rejoice that we were after a Godly sort made sorry, *God despising not the Sighing of a contrite*

contrite Heart, nor the Deſire of ſuch as are ſorrowful, the Sacrifice of God being a troubled Spirit: And as many as will, may *Work out their own Salvation,* with becoming *fear and trembling*; or in other Words with reverence, and ſtanding in awe, ſo as not to dare to Sin; God being a tremendous Deity: Yet the fearful ſhall have their *Portion*, or Part, *in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone, which is the Second Death,* Rev. 21. 8. together with the unbelieving and abominable, Murderers, Whoremongers, Sorcerers, Idolaters, and Lyars; the Fearful that are afraid to do their Duty; and inordinate Sorrow (that disjoints the Soul, and untunes the Affections, making Men's Religious Performances ſo like only bodily Labour, that profiteth ſo little, as though wanting a Soul to enliven it) may weaken and enfeeble the Mind, work ſuch a timorouſneſs on the Heart, as through fear to betray the Succours which reaſon offereth. And perhaps the Spirit of a Man will better bear ſuch his Infirmity, than the Spirit of a Woman hers. And as Women (whether or not as the weaker Veſſels) ſeem by Nature to be more apt for Commiſeration and Pity, being ſo eaſily moved to ſympathize with the afflicted, with more than Manly Pity; ſuch, as will not ſuffer the beholding ſad Objects, without a regret, more than that of Men; ſo, as they ſeem by Nature inclined to the commiſerating others, more than the robuſt Sex, may their Afflictions alſo bear equal proportion to themſelves, when in Miſery: And as the Pity afforded others in diſtreſs, did exceed, if not double that of Men; ſo when any way afflicted, ſtanding in need of the Divine Favour, or this World's Good, they may in greater bitterneſs of Soul, and anguiſh

anguish of Spirit, weep for themselves, as the Daughters of *Jerusalem* might more than the Sons, in our Blessed Saviours time, for him. And as in the case of administring bodily Physick, respect is first to be had to the constitution, and abatements made according to the Patient's Weakness and Infirmities; so in the sorrowful Religious purgation or clearing of the Soul. And they who Mourn sorely like Doves, (that are yet so innocent as to be proposed for our Imitation,) sorely for the more ordinary and common Frailties of Humane Life, might do well to take heed of too soft an Heart, working it self up even to so high a strain of inordinate Grief, as though to a distemper'd Sense, what through Constitution, what through Evil Suggestion.

Melancholick

Melancholick Perturbation of Mind.

NOW by the Complection of the Sins we groan under, we may gueſs at the root of ſuch Bitterneſs; thus, if the Infirmity ſo bewailed, be light, the Cauſe may ſeem the more pointed out, as riſing (like Sparks from the diſturbed Fire) from Melancholick Perturbation of Mind, that is perplex'd and troubled above due meaſure; where a milder, quiet, and higher degree of ſelf-promiſed Safety, might be more ſuiting and agreeable, as well as more becoming a Chriſtian.

Is not Moderation to be uſed in all the Duties of Chriſtianity? Or, is any Service required, that is at all unreaſonable? Is it not rather forbid, if it comes up but to any indecency? It is a Sign Satan, or a too tender, troubleſome Conſcience, is hard put to it, to upbraid, as ſometimes, of ſuch Trifles; and that they want greater Matters to accuſe of, and condemn for, more material and weighty things of the Law, omitted; or enormous and flagitious Crimes acted.

Men may, like a Tree, be well ſhaken, the better to ſettle; not to countenance a wild Confidence and preſumptuous Boldneſs in any; for where this is predominant by Nature, or Uſe, as another contrary extravagancy, it is likewiſe to be corrected, to be check'd and bridled into a middle ſtate of Mind, at leaſt into a more humble, and modeſt, as well as even poſture of Soul.

But ſome weaker Members of Chriſt's Myſtical Body, the Church, (whoſe Chriſtian Name might be, *O thou afflicted and toſſed!*) may be of ſo low a Form in the School of Divinity, as not to be able to read their Pardon which God has given them in our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; as many Malefactors, who yet have obtained it, might not be learned enough to do. And there may be many that dwell with Chriſt, & Chriſt with them, who yet carefully ſeek him *whom their Soul loveth*, as though they had loſt him, the eye of the Soul, as well as that of the Body, being ſo darken'd with tears, as not to be able ſo to ſee as to diſcern aright; like *Mary* in the Goſpel, weeping, making enquiry after Jeſus, ſeeking him of himſelf (ſuppoſing it had been the *Gardiner*,) not knowing ſhe was ſo near unto him, *John* 20.15. And if any ſo ſeek him ſorrowing, we know where he was once found, when ſo ſought of his own Virgin-Mother, namely, in the Temple. *Thy Way, O God, is in the Sanctuary.* In the Place where God records his Name, he will come unto thee, or meet thee, and bleſs thee; who does not uſe to come empty-handed; but of ſuch Royal Bounty is he, as not to be aſhamed to be called *our God*, which is a Word of great import, and ſuch as God will not leſſen the Dignity of, by unbecoming Loans: Thus, when a certain King had largely beſtowed his Gifts upon an Inferiour, that might be almoſt aſhamed to receive them, he ſaid, *I conſider what is fit for me, a King, to give, more than what 'tis but meet you ſhould receive.*

So again, the Annoyances of our Spiritual Life, (as well as the Advantages according to its Excellency) may be greater than thoſe of the Natural one;

one; for as Man hath an higher Life than the Beasts that perish; so accordingly capable of more Delight, and more Sorrow, than Brutes are of Pleasure or Pain. And a Christian, that lives *the Life of Faith*, is more capable of a greater Burden of Sorrow and Affliction in his Spiritual Life, having immediately to do with the infinite God, who, as when he creates Joy in the heart, what a Joy it is! So, when his Arrows stick fast in, and drink up a man's Spirit the Wound who can bear? For, as the Joys are *unspeakable and full of Glory*; so the Sorrows above Expression, disdaining all such servile Limits.

Now none has so clear an Understanding, so tender and delicate Affections, so receptive it may be also of the Impression of Divine Terrour, as the man that is more perfect and uncorrupt; thus an Heart of Flesh is more than an Heart of Stone. A wicked man, whose Conscience is seared, and so for the present, as though past feeling almost; though he has more cause to be troubled, may not be so much as a godly man. Thus a Brawny Constitution is not so sensible of Stripes; as may be seen in some Slaves.

'Tis a sign we are in the greater Light, if Motes so clearly appear to our view; for such we should not so easily discern or perceive, if we walked on in Darkness, though Satan may pursue us the more vigorously for being so richly laden homeward; but God (who knows how to deliver the Godly) will shew us *the path of Life*, and be our Guide until Death, will cover our Head in the day of Battel, the very critical hour of Temptation, and power of Darkness; *who is able to perfect any good thing begun in us, and to preserve us to his Heavenly King-*

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dom; wherefore hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the Revelation of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 1. 13. *Being again begotten to a lively Hope, to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the Power of God (out of whose hand none can pluck you away) through Faith unto Salvation, though now for a season (if need be) you are in heavineſs through manifold temptations; if need be, that the Trial of your Faith, being much more precious than Gold that periſheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto Praiſe, and Honour, and Glory, at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt; whom having not ſeen, you love; and therefore in whom, though now you ſee him not, yet believing, you may rejoyce with joy unſpeakable and full of Glory, as knowing in whom you have believed, and reſting in a ſure and certain hope, one day to receive the end of your Faith, even the Salvation of your Souls; for faithful is he that hath promiſed.*

It is not altogether, if at all, according to men's own miſgiving hearts, and needleſs Fears and Doubts concerning their future State, if they do their Duty, and continue to the end in well-doing, that God will judge them; but *according to their Works, whether good or evil*; the Word of our Lord ſhall judge Men at that day, *they that have done good ſhall go into Life everlaſting*; wherefore if thou doſt *eſchew evil, & do good*, tho' thou goeſt now on thy way weeping; yet bearing forth *good ſeed*, it will *ſpring up to everlaſting life*; thou ſhalt doubtleſs come again with joy, (though the Seed-time be ſo dark and lowring) *and bring thy ſheaves with thee, rejoycing with more than the joy of harveſt; for Light is ſown for the Righteous, and Gladneſs for the upright*

right in heart; whether it be yet come up or not, fully appearing what we ſhall be, who ſee through a Glaſs ſo darkly; and like Men in the dark, are ſo apt to be afraid of fanſiful, imaginary, and aereal dangers, as well as of going wrong. Though to the Godly Light may ariſe out of Darkneſs, as the Stars begin to ſhine in the Night. What is watered with Tears, may yield the greater encreaſe of Joy; and if our Infirmities, which may endear us to our natural Parents, tempt us to think God will be no more intreated, but hath ſhut up his loving kindneſs in utter diſpleaſure; hath he therefore *forgotten to be gracious? and is his Mercy come to an end for evermore?*

A weak Child may be owned by its Father, as well as a ſtronger; and as to earthly Care of it, be therefore the better provided for by the Parents.

If Conſcience, or our Enemy be exalted againſt us, yet why ſhould our *Soul be caſt down, and be ſo diſquieted within us, even when the iniquity of our heels compaſſeth us about? For as a Father pitieth his own Children, (and ſpareth the Son that ſerveth him;) even ſo is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him; removing their Sins from them as far as the Eaſt is from the Weſt; or drowning them in the depth of the Sea*, that they never riſe up more in judgment to condemn.

But ſome may be of ſo uneaſie a Temper, ſo perplexing a Nature, as that God, commiſerating them, may ſuffer them in pity (as well as of very faithfulneſs) to be troubled in ſome lower degree, to exerciſe their own tormenting Faculty about, who otherwiſe, if ſet free from it, might plunge themſelves deeper in another kind of Miſery, if

not run alſo into Deſpair, as though they were reſolved all their days ſhould be afflicted, whether they had been proportionably evil or not: And when as very Brutes will comfortably enjoy the preſent moment, till the Evil overtake them, and ſeize upon them; 'tis well if good men ſometimes, if they can but reach out their hand to the utmoſt Link thereof, do not draw the whole Chain of Miſery upon themſelves, make that as preſent, which ſhall never be, by diſpoſition improved into ſuperſtitious Conceits, and Religion ſcared out of its wits; who have more need of Phyſick than Divinity, to be preſcribed and adminiſtred to them, in whom a black Melancholy prevailing, (that is like Tinder, to catch and ſpread, the leaſt Spark lighting on it) they are apt to ſuffer Reaſon to be born down, and overcome of Paſſion, to be ſubdued, and brought into ſubjection by ſuch ſervile and baſe, ſuch ſordid and ſlaviſh Servants, howe'er mounted on Horſeback, and make Reaſon their lawful Sovereign, to go on foot; or rather to be trampled under it of ſuch wild Extravagancies, that, like Common People uſurping Government, exerciſe it tyrannically, with tumultuous noiſe, and dark confuſion, when hurried, till blind: Not but that there is a great deal of Good in Godly Sorrow rightly applied. For look *as one that mourneth for his Friend that was as his own Soul; or as a Father afflicted with untimely Mourning for his Son taken away*, Wiſd. 14. 15. During that Glut of Sorrow, that Tyrannick Grief, does not entangle himſelf ſo much with the Cares of this World, does not ſo reliſh the ſinful Pleaſures of it, as that he ſhould ſo eaſily be captivated of Senſuality and vain Delights, as he might be wont;

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is not, for the time, at all enamour'd with the deceitfulneſs of this Life, lets go all froward Anger; if he has a Quarrel with any, is not ſo at leiſure in himſelf, or diſpoſed for to reliſh Acts of Revenge upon his Enemies, that yet at other times, when not ſo clogg'd, and held of this Chain ſo faſt about him, binding him as it were, to better Behaviour, might be ſweet unto him; but is wholly taken up in Mind and Heart almoſt about this particular Grief: So, one ſorrowing after a godly ſort, is not ſo apt and ready to be captivated by the Allurements of the World, the Devil, or his own corrupted Nature, unleſs it be to be plunged too deep in Tears, to be drowned in them, to be overwhelmed of Sorrow upon Sorrow, and to be overcome of theſe things, which may be too often ſeen.

One that ſpiritually mourns, is not ſo prepared in Mind and Heart, to receive kindly and with acceptance the Blandiſhments of the World, when offered deceitfully unto him; but is, as it were, crucified and dead unto the World; and that, as to him, has no Life in it, *no Form, or Beauty, no Comelineſs*, that he ſhould greatly, if at all deſire it: And perhaps the like may be ſaid concerning other Temptations preſenting themſelves to be embraced; the Soul that is dried up and withered, like Graſs, the Soul that *is ſorely and greatly vexed, and that goeth ſtooping and feeble* (ſays *Baruch*) *will give thee Praiſe and Righteouſneſs, O Lord.* And though all Men have not need of the ſame perfect change of Life and Heart, as to ſtand in want of the ſame remarkable and ſignal Repentance; yet every one may offer ſuch their Sacrifice and Sin-Offering.

And if Men can ſweat when under a great ſtake, and betray a Concern in their very Looks, ſhall any, whoſe Souls are in danger of being irrecoverably loſt for ever, by the Tricks and Quirks, by the Slights and Cheats of a rooking, foul Gameſter; (like ſome, that knowing not how otherwiſe to behave themſelves under, or well to bear their great Loſings) put on a feigned Mirth, or counterfeit an Indifferency, giving the Lye to their own Heart, that in the midſt of Laughter, and ſuch mad Mirth, is ſorrowful?

Things of an eternal influence ſhould be of more weight, to ſink deeper into men's hearts than ſo. Others there are, that might *count it all joy when they fall into divers Temptations*, ſince divers Reaſons may be given (beſides ſecret and hidden ones) for ſuch trying of their Faith and Patience, to ſtrengthen their Graces by continual Exerciſe, to humble and keep them low, to prevent their being ſupine, to keep them from falling into Sin, that might otherwiſe more undiſcernedly creep and ſteal upon them, ſo eaſily beſetting on every ſide; to keep up their enmity with the World, to make them more earneſtly deſire and ſeek another Countrey; and *great are the Troubles of the righteous*; and when without are Troubles, within may be Fears alſo, God chaſtening as he will, but more or leſs in one kind or other, *every Son whom he receiveth*; *who ſpared not his own*, when he ſtood in the place of Sinners, and he may ſee ſome more fit for Judgment in this World, than what men may count different from it, *Mercy*, notwithſtanding his Judgments are ſeaſon'd with that too; and it is abundantly enough (is it not?) if Men by their Religion, and by all means can ſave their Souls, though

though with the loſs of every thing elſe. Wherefore deſire nothing greatly, but God and Goodneſs, or nothing elſe at all, but in, and for him, if you deſire to be at eaſe, thus give reſt unto your own Soul, reſign it up in all the Affections thereof, unto God, as if you were dying, and ſo giving of it up into his hands as *a faithful Creator*, and *merciful Redeemer*, to be diſpoſed of by him, as he ſhall in Mercy think fit; for as we are bound to believe whatſoever he does is infinitely wiſe; ſo why not alſo as much bound to believe it is infinitely good, if not alſo infinitely beſt, for us too, as well as in it ſelf? And if with St. *Paul*, we *pray once and again to be delivered out of Temptation*, if we are delivered from the Evil thereof, if God's Grace be ſufficient for us, what need we be ſo ſolicitous, whether we are ſaved from ſuch Hours and Powers of Darkneſs, or ſtrengthened under them, help'd in them? *He that overcometh, ſhall not be hurt of the ſecond Death*, Rev. 2. 11. Nay, *to him will God give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God*, verſ 7. of that Chapter. Might we not then ſay, *Prove me, O God, and try me*? For 'tis but ſmall Credit to any Man's Honeſty, for him to ſay, I was never truſted, that I ſhould approve it, and make it manifeſt. Now, what is the meaning of the Words, *To him that overcometh*, if there be no ſtrife? And that cannot be, without an Enemy to fight againſt; and the more difficulty in the Fight, the more Glory in the Triumph: To overcome without any danger, or ſo much as occaſion to ſhew Men's Valour and Conduct; may ſometimes be to overcome with ſhame almoſt, as though an inglorious Victory.

And though 'tis a perfection to be endeavour'd after, namely, the conquering our ſelves, and unruly Paſſions and Appetites ſo, as to take off the harſhneſs of the Commandment, as it may ſeem to Fleſh and Blood; (which harſhneſs is not in that, but our corrupted gain-ſaying and rebellious Nature,) and ſo to ſweeten our Duty with delight, ſo far from being grievous unto us; yet, as when a Command is moſt eaſie and grateful to us, it ſhews the greater perverſneſs and obſtinacy, if we refuſe or neglect to do it, when like *Naaman* the *Syrian*, bid to do ſo light and eaſie a thing: So on the contrary, may it not ſeem to proceed of greater Love, or Fear of God before our eyes; if, when the Commandment bids us do, what to the fleſhly Nature is like cutting off our right Hand, or plucking out our right Eye, we out of pure obedience to the Authority of that Precept, do it againſt our Natural Temper, and vicious inclination, bridling and bringing it by force and conſtraint unto the Obedience of Chriſt, when like Horſe or Mule, otherwiſe brutiſhly ungovernable? Some Sins may be out of ſome Men's Element, not at all agreeable to their very corrupted Nature, but very foreign and remote from their Make, their Temper, and Conſtitution; perhaps ſo irkſome, as that, were they not prohibited, they would never commit them; nay poſſibly, were they commanded, and indiſpenſibly enjoined them, they would rather ſin in breaking the poſitive Command, than act them; now in ſuch things ſo averſe to a man's complexion, there is but very little, if any vertue ſhewed in the obſervance of a negative Command. But *let the wicked forſake* [*his*] *way*, that he may ſay, *I have kept me from mine iniquity*,

quity, the Sin which did ſo eaſily beſet me, in all the courſe of my Actions, my peculiar Intereſt, ſins ſuiting with my Condition, inſinuating themſelves into my Calling and Employment; nay, the myſterious Iniquities of my Art, without which, a Man is not accounted to have his Trade. And as ſome men are more remarkable for one Vertue or Grace eminently diſplaying it ſelf in them, ſhining forth as *Moſes*'s *Meekneſs*, (like his gilded Face) *Job*'s *Patience*, &c. Or as the Powers of a Man's Soul are in each, ſo differently organized and diſpoſed, that this Man's ſerves him beſt, and with the leaſt trouble, to remember faithfully; another's, with the greateſt eaſe to paſs a right Judgment on Things or Perſons; a third man's *Genius* lies for Invention; a fourth's, for Spruceneſs of Wit; and one of theſe the moſt natural or improved Talent of the Man; ſo, in natural Men, (in the worſt ſence of Nature) ſome may have a Faculty above others, in this or that particular Vice, to act it with the greateſt ſlight and dexterity, as though getting more pleaſure out of it than another can; and we muſt get the Conqueſt over our ſelves firſt, and our ſinful Tempers, or Habits, before we muſt expect the contrary Vertues and Duties will become grateful unto us; the Ways of Vertue are ſmootheſt to them that have trod and beaten the Path way moſt; and pleaſant, but then chiefly, if not only ſo, to thoſe that have been well diſciplined, and ſo can now exerciſe themſelves therein with leſs difficulty, and habitual Acts are not only done with the greateſt eaſe; but alſo in the higheſt perfection; but if there was no trouble in becoming a new Creature, what need the Promiſe of Reward be ſo large? (which may not

prevail with ſome Men neither,) though when the old Stock is once graffed with that which is good, the good tree as naturally and as eaſily brings forth good Fruit, as the corrupt Tree, evil Fruit.

Again, though in this Life we are at the beſt but very imperfect, yet ſometimes more ſo than at others. Though our Faith be always ſo weak, as that we might well enough pray, *Lord, though I do believe, help thou my Unbelief:* Yet ſometimes 'tis allay'd with more Fear, more Doubting.

Though our Love to Chriſt be never ſtrictly and truly too hot, yet how our Affection may ſometimes cool, or ſtand but like a Bow unbent! And perhaps no man living can always keep it in the ſame degree of heat, ſuch, as when it may at particular Seaſons ſeem vehemently to burn, as though it would ſwallow Men up, and loſe them in it ſelf, when a piouſly devout Soul is ſo filled with the Love of God, and things Divine, in ſuch an intenſe Holineſs, as if it was dead to the Thoughts or Deſires of any of this World's Good. At one time a Man can ſuffer for the Name of Chriſt, and at another, is more out of frame to do it, and again may afterward deſire it.

Take the Life of a Chriſtian all together, and it is a kind of Progreſs, or continual growing, or going from Grace to Grace, and from one degree of Vertue to another; yet take his Life apart, conſider and view him in every Circumſtance and Stage of it; and 'tis well if you do not find him now and then ſtanding ſtill; nay, what if I had ſaid in particular Acts, going back? Thus the Sun riſes, and as it climbs ſtill higher and higher, nearer to the *Meridian*, the Day is generally to be accounted hotter and hotter: But though the Sun never

never grows weary and ſtands, much leſs goes back, but is always getting ground; yet through one impediment or other, what through Wind, or Cloud, 'tis poſſible the Morning-Sun may be brighter and warmer than the Noon: Thus, a Child, from his Birth to his full Stature, is (we ſay) in a growing ſtate and condition; yet do but conſider him at ſome particular time, and he may really abate of his Fleſh, and fail very much of his wonted natural ſtrength; and not altogether unlike may it ſeem to be in our Spiritual Life, till we *come to the fulneſs of ſtature in Chriſt*; no ſuch exquiſite frame are the beſt in here, but that they may be diſordered and ruffled, their Life chequer'd and ſtreak'd all along with Impatience, Diſtruſt, or Diffidence; too often blotted more grolly, but always interlined; though we receive good Gifts from above, yet ſubject to Turns and Variations: He only, from whom *every perfect gift cometh, is without variableneſs or ſhadow of turning*, Holineſs in him, being not a Quality, but his very Eſſence; but in the beſt of Men it is but an Infuſion or Quality, a Grace not eſſential to the natural Life and Being of any Man; for then none could remain without it; but if that was once loſt, the Man would have an end, and no longer remain. Though him I call a Man eminently ſo, who has moſt of the primitive Nature of one, in whom the Image of God is leaſt defaced; for may we not figuratively ſtile him as well any thing elſe in humane ſhape, that has God's Image raſed quite out, and is made very much up of the mixture of wild Beaſts, Fox, and Wolf, and Tiger, and Centaur, (if there be ſuch) or more monſtrous ſtill, as being inverted, where the Beaſt rides the Man,

Man, or is not such, Devil indeed incarnate? 'Tis true, who is or can be equally like our God, who *charges his Angels with folly?* Who else is so Light, as to have no Darkness at all in him? But our Holiness is our Imitation of his, or the application of our Minds and Actions to an agreeable conformity; he is the true Pattern, the Standard, which if we do not imitate, and live after, living the Life of God, if we are not made Partakers of a Divine Nature, we shall never escape the Pollution that through Lust is in the World, but shall rather love to be at Enmity with God.

Now the Scriptures are a true Glass to shew Men their Spots and Deformities, if we behold our selves in them, they will shew us whether we walk contrary to God, or whether we are made conformable to him, receiving as it were the engravings of Holiness upon our Souls; when by a steady and constant beholding (or having regard to) the Holy One, the Speculation is not to be Steril; if Vision did so assimulate as that *Laban*'s Sheep conceived according to the Rods before them: Will not the Eye of Faith affect something in our Spiritual Vision and close adherence? This is our Likeness begun, this is our Participation, this our Resemblance, when we are merciful, as our Heavenly Father is merciful, when we are true, (as He is the Truth it self) when we are Just, Faithful, and Loving as Brethren, Children of the same Father, the God of Love, then we own our selves to be of Christ's Family, or God's Spiritual Offspring: These things are the Image of God in us, and by these God does as it were become visible in Man; for as those invisible things of God, even his Eternal Power and God-head, are seen in the things

things that are created: So are not those other invisible things of God, his Eternal Purity and Holiness, seen in those that are sanctified? In Externals, if a Man touch an unclean thing, shall he not be defiled therewith? Does he not carry away with him the Mark or Impress? So for inward defilements, when the Soul inordinately cleaves and adheres to, when the Mind drenches it self in filthy things, when it drinks in unclean, unholy Objects; this defiles the Mind, and makes the Thoughts impure and unclean.

Thus, if we converse with worldly and base things, the Image and Impression of such is sealed upon us; and on the other Hand, by reverend familiarity with Christ and his Holy Ways, we receive the stamp of true Holiness in our Life and common Conversation, going thus to him that hath called us, we learn of his ways; and think not that because the Children of God are liable to so many Failings and Errors of Life, so many Errata's to be corrected, there being so many Wiles and Circuits in the Heart of a Man, that Worm five Foot long: There can therefore be no Judgment made in the case between the Sins of the generate and the unregenerate; for though the Heart be deceitful; and as to the future, who can know it? Yet there is a great difference surely between the Godly and the Wicked, discernable enough for the Children of God to be manifestly so, as well as the Children of the Devil; and may not the Heart know it self so at present as to be able to tell whether the bent and inclination be good, how the Workings of it are, and whether it be without Guile? And according to the sincerity or insincerity of that, God Judges of us, and not according

cording to the outward appearance of any Man's Perſon.

A Good Man may have often Infirmities, and there is not a Juſt Man upon Earth that doth Good and ſinneth not; thoſe that for their general ſtate, are Holy and Good, may have Sins of Ignorance, Sins of Incogitancy, ſudden Surreptions, indeliberate Actions, Imperfections of Duty, not ſerving God with that high degree of Delight, or perhaps of Reverence, as might ſeem but becoming; and Good Men may have ſome particular Evils incident to them, that in a ſort, may, in compariſon of other Sins, be more predominant, yet not ſo as to get the Maſtery over Grace; they may have ſome particular weakneſs of Soul, or feebleneſs of Mind, as it is evident by experience there are Corruptions to which a Child of God may by Nature be more inclinable; and where Temptations are ſtronger, though reſiſtance be made, the Man may be more peſter'd and haunted with them, than with other Temptations, which is a conſtant matter of Exerciſe and Humiliation unto him: Though ſuch as are born of God, and have his Seed remaining in them, do overcome the Wicked One, ſo as not to fall into thoſe Iniquities wherein there is an abſolute contrariety to Grace, as hatred to God, final Apoſtaſie, *&c.* do not Sin unto their Death, in that they Sin not with their whole Heart, but deſire to be ſought and brought Home, when at any time they have wandred and gone aſtray, or if they are overborn, 'tis with ſurprize, or rather as Sufferers with reluctancy than deliberate Actors of Sin, their Heart proteſting againſt it; not but that a *Series* of vain Thoughts, idle Words, paſſionate Speeches, may generally be prevented

prevented by the ordinary assistance of Grace, and Men's own more narrow watching of their own Hearts, and setting a closer and stronger Guard before their Mouths, to keep the Door of their Lips to restrain them as it were with a Bridle; yet if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, restore such an one. Have not Good Men (though herein not for our Example or Excuse) fallen very foully? as *Noah*, *Lot*, and *David*, who yet keeps the Title of Holy. For failure in Duty is not to be determined altogether either by the greatness or the smallness of the Act. There is as much Treason in Coyning Pence, as any other greater Piece for ought I know; or in Coyning Silver, as Gold; or but one piece only as in Minting ten thousand. Allowed affection to smaller Sin, is deadly; he that is unfaithful in a little, will be so in much. A Man, where Temptations are weak and impotent, of slight concernment and importance, may sooner confute and controul them, and his obedience is the cheaper, and comes the more easily: So that our Rebellion to God, by smaller Sins, may seem the greater upon that account, and our Affections to them, may be such, as to denominate us wicked and unholy. So, again, great Sins, as they may be reckon'd, may be Infirmities; for Iniquities are determined by their manner: *Jude* 15. *Their ungodly Deeds, which they have ungodlily committed*, when with full purpose of Heart, or consent of Will, against Conscience enlightned, broad awake, frighfully staring on; when the course (being set in no good way) argues an habitual hatred or contempt of God.

'Tis the Will is the great Sinner, and were it not for the perverseness of that, the Affections might be made to serve, or at least be kept as Prisoners;

Priſoners; who becauſe they will not walk honeſtly abroad in the World, are ſhut up between two Walls, kept cloſe, chained, lock'd, and fetter'd, there to learn how to be conſtrained to live honeſtly.

Again, ſome are afraid where no fear is, afraid of innocent and indifferent things; notwithſtanding where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion: Some, upon whom *Satan*'s Eyes are ſharpened, may be deluded by him, ſetting things in a falſe light, or repreſenting them under undue *Mediums*: Thus a Stick, though never ſo ſtrait in its ſelf, if ſhewed partly in the Air, partly in the Water, will appear very crooked to the Eye, till Reaſon can evidence the ſame to be otherwiſe than it ſeems, while ſo placed. There may be ſuch, as doing good, may yet doubt of their being accepted, becauſe God is not in all their thoughts concerning it.

Now although it be highly reaſonable that whatſoever we do, ſhould be done with a deſign of advancing God's Glory, (which yet in it ſelf can neither be leſſened nor increaſed by us, or all that we can do;) and though it be but very right and equal that our Actions ſhould have reſpect to him as their firſt and laſt chief End; and notwithſtanding that they who do ſo act, do beſt, as moſt agreeable to right reaſon; yet is it preciſely required that in every Moral Action there ſhould be accompanying a formal intention: May it not be well pleaſing if there be a vertual, habitual one? It might be ask'd, whether this be not enough to ſtile ſuch Actions, ſometimes done to the Glory of God, and to cauſe them to be well pleaſing in his ſight, if there be no contrary Intention? At leaſt may not

a Man do what is Honeſt in the ſight of all Men, and what is Good in the ſight of God, without ſuch an immediate and direct forethought and aim at God in thoſe his Actions, as that the Love he bears to God and his Glory ſhould ſo ſtrongly influence, as in every thought to ſtir up the Actor, in every Moment of his Life, and every Minute circumſtance of his Actions, to have his Eye fixed only on the Divine Glory? May he not alſo, in the ſecond place have reſpect to the Recompence of Reward?

And as to eager Intention keeping pace with the Action, it might be queſtion'd, whether a skilful Muſician, about to play on a Muſical Inſtrument, conſiders ſo, as firſt to reſolve upon the ſtriking every particular Note of what he ſometimes very careleſly performs, e'er he ſtrikes it? Or, whether the firſt and great Intention of ſetting himſelf to play ſuch or ſuch a thing, does not chiefly accompany his Performance? Does a Man in a Journey think of the end every ſtep he takes? Or, does he proceed effectually on his way, only when he conſiders the next Movement or Progreſſion? Or, does the firſt Intention and Deſire of being at ſuch a Place rather continue to influence him inſenſibly? And right Reaſon being the cauſe of his taking ſuch a Journey, is not every ſtep or pace as reaſonable advancing, as though he thought on nothing elſe all the way? And to be ſo intent, might be more difficult and hard than the Journey it ſelf; the one being the wearineſs of the Mind, the other of the Body; and but the ſame thing in effect done; namely, the Journey perform'd.

Is it neceſſary to the conſtituting of an Evil Act, that the Intention and Deſign of tranſgreſſing a Law of God, run all the while along with the Action? Or, whereſoever that Evil Intention flags and begins to break off, is there the ſame Action continued proceeding on from thenceforth innocently? Nay, but if a Man reſolve to go upon an Evil Deſign, 'tis not an Evil Action only while he is intent in the acting, for then Murder and Theft for this reaſon may ceaſe to be ſo; but when Men are in a way of Wickedneſs, the Tranſgreſſion may ſuffice to render them Evil Men: So on the contrary, is it not to the Honour of God, if that which is ſuiting with the Divine Nature be done, though he that does it, does not all the while immediately think on God's Glory, ſo as to level every part thereof at it, as an Arrow is level'd at a Mark; provided God's Glory be the Spring and Fountain of the Act, from whence it flows, and to which it tends, and is derived upon?

Farther, if a Meſſenger of *Satan* buffet thee, whether God anſwer thee in the utter removal of what offends thee, or but ſpeaks ſo much Peace, as ſufficiency of Grace to ſupport thee, it is enough. And if thy Sin hath taken ſuch hold upon thee, that thou art not able to look up; or is ſo freſh and lively in thy Memory, as though repreſented to thy view, to be read in great and large Characters, and ever before thee, rejoicing and proudly vaunting, boaſting it ſelf againſt thee, triumphing over thee dejected, as if it meant to devour and make an end of thee upon Earth, ſaying, Aha, I have prevailed againſt him, *I will laugh at his Calamity, and mock when his Fear cometh as a Whirlwind,* he

he ingeminating *who shall deliver me from this Body of Sin?* Or, *save me from the Wrath to come*, that I, wretched Man as I am, have been treasuring up? This may happen unto thee after thy Pardon for all thy Offences be sealed in Heaven.

When *Nathan* told *David*, that the *Lord had taken away the Iniquity of his Sin, so that he should not die*, still he crys out in the bitterness of his Soul, and anguish of Spirit, *Have Mercy upon me O God, wash me from my Wickedness and cleanse me from my Sin.* The Scar may seem uncomely and deformed, after the Wound is healed. Neither had he, the Man after God's own Heart, always the same State of Mind; but though one while he says, *He would not fear if an Host of Men laid Siege unto him*; yet another, he not only feared, but betray'd that fear by his Words, *I shall one Day fall by the Hand of Saul*; as though his Faith had fainted, or was for a time in a Swound.

There are such great Water-Floods sometimes, as that 'tis well if our Souls can always comfortably come near unto God, though they count his Loving-kindness better than the Life it self, without whose Presence a Palace is as dark as a close Prison, if not every place an Hell.

And it is a great Earthly Mercy, shall I call it? or Heavenly one rather vouchsafed upon Earth, that in this Vale of Misery and Tears, where there are so many causes of Sorrow and Grief up and down, and so easily to be met with; so many professed Enemies to our Joy and Comfort, we can rejoice in any State at all, even the very best; which could not be, but from the God of all Consolation; for if he send leanness into the Soul, his wrathful displeasure will soon dry and wither it like Grass.

But thanks be to God, though Heaven be the proper and bright Region of Happineſs, which Life is already begun in us by Faith; yet whilſt we are here in the World, we have beſide that Earneſt of future Glory, other Pledges of his Love and Bounty, to lighten our Pilgrimage; and foraſmuch as more may ſeem needful at ſome times than at other, God is graciouſly pleaſed to diſpenſe ſuitably, according to Men's tryals, ſometime opening his Hand wider to fill ſuch as ſtand in greater want of his Favour; in greater Afflictions and Temptations, the larger is their Allowance: And the Oyl of Grace will breed the Oyl of Gladneſs, that while ſorrowing, we might be ſtill as though ſomewhat rejoicing; while troubled on every ſide, and perplex'd, yet not in Deſpair; nor unmanly caſt down when diſtreſſed. When in heavineſs, think upon God; though it be more ingenuous to frequent his Ordinances, to viſit his Temple, to give him Thanks, to call upon him, before ſuch time as the Storm falls upon us, when we are ſcarce able to look up, and come but as though only to ſhew him of our trouble, and to be delivered out of it; though it be far better by often repeated Acts, of what God may in his Gracious Condeſcenſion call Friendſhip, to keep up, or renew our Acquaintance, to ſtrengthen it, as we do by kind undeſigning Viſits to a Friend, when we are in Health and Proſperity, and do not go to load him with our Cares, but purely to enjoy him.

'Tis but fit that ſuch as have ſold themſelves to work Wickedneſs, ſhould dip their Pen in Gall and write bitter things againſt themſelves: Call to mind, O ye Tranſgreſſors, ſet your ſecreteſt Sins (if

(if poſſible) in the ſight of your own Countenance, be afflicted, and mourn, and weep! As indeed 'tis Natural enough, as well as often ſeen, that a Man becomes (if I may ſo ſay) a Succeſſor to himſelf, like an Heir, to inherit and poſſeſs the Sins of his Youth; to read the Follies thereof, when old, in pain and diſquietude, in the Winter of his Years, as againſt foul Weather, and to be filled with his own ways; for indeed puniſhment is but as the latter part, or ſting of Sin, which it draws in the Tail after it, if not rather an inſeparable Companion and Concomitant; if I Sin, then thou markeſt me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine Iniquity; when Pride cometh, then cometh Shame; if I am Wicked, woe unto me; for *they that ſow Iniquity reap Vanity.*

But the Devil's Malice is ſo great, and ſo quick-ſighted, as to find the leaſt thing amiſs in Men's outward Actions, any ſpot or blemiſh, though but in the hemm of their Garment, or any thing not becoming and ſitting very well upon them; and then with that ſo terrifies thoſe ſometimes that might truly ſay, *O how dear are thy Counſels unto me, O God!* as though they had *ſaid in their Hearts there was no God*; or to the Almighty, *depart from us, for we deſire no knowledge of thy ways:* But at the laſt Day our Lord may ſay to a great many pious Souls, *Come ye Bleſſed of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you; for I was an hungred and ye gave me Meat; thirſty, and ye gave me Drink:* Who ſhall yet Anſwer, *Lord, when or wherein have we thus miniſtred unto thee?* And to others again boldly, or confidently enough, laying claim to ſuch intimate Acquaintance with him, *Depart ye curſed, I know you not, nor any Workers of Iniquity.*

Man's relation to, or Divine acquaintance with God, conſiſteth in an Holy and Reverend Communion, rather than a ſawcy, mean, and low familiarity, in which a Man ſometimes converſes with his Neighbour. God is in Heaven, and we upon Earth, though he is alſo pleaſed to dwell with them that are of a contrite Spirit, and though the Secret of the Lord may be with them that fear him, and though no doubt he may have communicated the Joy unſpeakable, to encourage and ſupport his Servants in particular caſes, ſome extraordinary exigences; yet we are not to expect, or always truſt to, what God *can* do, eſpecially ſince a diſturbed Fancy, a ſick Mind, a Natural or Diabolical *Enthuſiaſm* may ſtrongly ſuggeſt or foment great Deluſions, even Lyes, or ſuch groſs Miſtakes as Melancholick Fermentations may ſtir up, ſlurring a cheat upon diſtempered Souls, ſuch as are apt to be lull'd into a Golden Dream, in which they are raviſh'd and tranſported beyond themſelves, as though caught up to the Third Heaven, or were no longer in the Body, and yet can give no Reaſon perhaps for the exalted Hope in them, as though Religion was all Ecſtaſie, or not ſo much as a reaſonable Thing. Whereas the Sacred Acquaintance of a Good Chriſtian, Wiſe according to Sobriety, is contracted rationally and ſubſtantially, not fondly and in Imagination only; not by proud Pretenſions of unaccountable manifeſtations of God's Holy Spirit within them, by ſtrange incomes; which wild confidence may have deceived many into a vain belief of their double Intereſt in Heaven, of being highly favour'd in that Court, as though they had a deciſive ſuffrage, if not in an holy way able to prevail againſt God. Away with

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ſuch ſtanting Piety, and give me the Apoſtle's comfortable Truſt, that he had a good Conſcience: Are we in all things willing to live honeſtly, with reſpect to all Men, and godly in the preſent World, and ſoberly, with reſpect to our ſelves, knowing how to poſſeſs our ſelves in Sanctification and Honour? For *this is the will of God concerning you*: And as our relation to God is founded in Grace; ſo the Grace of God appears, *teaching to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, &c.

St. *Paul*, though ſo great and learned a Doctor, would, when to reaſon about the Chriſtian Religion, do it concerning *Righteouſneſs*, *Temperance*, &c. *For what doth the Lord require more than to do Juſtice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? And who ſhall dwell in God's holy Hill, but he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, and that hath not lifted up his mind unto vanity*, &c? So that unleſs there be any new Goſpel to be preached, or the Apoſtle, the Prophet, and the Pſalmiſt, that *Triumviri*, were miſerably miſtaken concerning the Tenor of the Old, which is *Faith*, *Repentance from dead works*, *a new Nature*, *a new Creature*, *Sanctification* throughout; 'tis well, if many, that for the time ought to have been Teachers, are not to be new taught again the very firſt Principles of the Oracles of God; nay, and well too, (though always learning) if ever they are able to come to the knowledge of the Truth (as it is in Jeſus) what through their Blindneſs, and Ignorance, (tho' they ſay they ſee) their Prejudice, and Paſſion, their Zeal not according to knowledge, or Spiritual Pride, a thing that God does always in every Creature endued with a rational Soul or Faculty, ſet himſelf againſt, to reſiſt.

If we are ſo far improved in our holy Religion, as to go upon ſuch a Ground as the Anchor of our Hope will not plough, nor make aſhamed; we may ſee our Intention pure and ſpiritual, our Reſolution firm and fix'd, our Heart entirely devoted unto God; ſo as having not received the Grace of God in vain, we may humbly inſiſt upon the Promiſes of God in Chriſt, as to Salvation; in which God having cauſed us to put our truſt, we may infer, having *fought a good Fight, and kept the Faith to the finiſhing of our courſe, there is a Crown laid up for us in Heaven, which God the righteous Judge will give us at that day; for faithful is he that hath promiſed*, were we as faithful in our Performances, which we have promiſed likewiſe unto him.

But if acquainting our ſelves with our ſelves, (for we may long converſe with, and yet be ſtrangers to our ſelves,) we find we have been *alienated from the Life of God*, we muſt conſider well what we are, and what we are like to be hereafter; *Chriſt* will have no Fellowſhip with *Belial*; nor does God ſtand in need of our Service, as though he ſhould be better'd by it; for we are unprofitable after we have done all we can; but he would have us capacitated, as thoſe that wait on Princes, are qualified as his Servants, to receive Good, and to keep it.

If then proving our own ſelves, we find ſuch a correſpondence between Heaven and us, as is held in an holy Communion with him that is inviſible, if we are ſo guided by his influence, into Truth, as to walk the ways of Righteouſneſs, truly ſerving him all the days of our Life, or but conſider ſo, as to turn from our own ways, and if other Gods have

have had the Rule over us, to make mention now of his Righteouſneſs only; the Blood of Chriſt cleanſing us from all Sin, we have acceptance with God, there being a Reconciliation between him and every true Believer that ſhews forth his Faith by his Works, as a Tree, of what kind it is, by its Fruit; and the Conſcience being cleanſed, waſh'd, and purified from dead works, to ſerve the living God, he appears no more as an angry Judge, but as a loving Father.

To take this in pieces; Where there is acceptance with God, there is Influence from him who is able to touch and heal; or if he but ſay the word, his Servant ſhall be made whole; yea, if he will it, thou ſhalt immediately be clean: Not that from a ſudden fright of Devotion, we are to date our Converſion; but continuing living Branches in that Vine, we muſt have our Fruit unto Holineſs, if we would be purged by him, to bring forth more Fruit, and not be as dead, while living, like wooden Members, that can receive no nouriſhment from the Body; or like a dead Tree, which the Sun, that cheriſhes living ones, dries and withers away: That which is a *Savour of Life unto Life* to ſome, may be a *Savour of Death unto Death* to others: Thus Poyſon may be conveyed in Perfume; and very ſtrength of Cordial may kill a Man.

And then to have God our Father (who is the beſt Friend, and worſt Enemy,) imboldens us in the greateſt time of need, all things being ſerene and clear; having *Faith and a good Conſcience*, a Man need not fear the Snares of Death, that King of Terrors, and Enemy of Nature, but Friend to Grace, but may comfortably launch out into Eter-

nity, ſhoot the great Gulf, it being ſometimes very little more to him than to *Enoch*, to be tranſlated, having pleaſed God; (whom becauſe he cannot ſee while he lives, he may deſire to die, that he may ſee him, and be with him, which is ſo far better,) or than to *Moſes*, to go up to the Mount and die; (for why ſhould he be any more afraid to truſt God with his Soul, than to truſt him here with both Soul and Body; it being he that keeps us even here, or the Devil would preſently ſeize us?) Or than to *Simeon*, to depart in peace; having, like *Hezekiah*, *walked before God with an upright heart*, he cannot with him, *weep ſorely* at his going hence, to be no more ſeen; but rather deſires *to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt*; it being much happier to ſee him as he is, a Scene of Light opening to receive him that departs hence in the Lord, and the good Angels attending joyfully to carry the Souls of ſuch upon the Wing, taking their flight to *Abraham's* Boſom; but then, though the Philoſopher reckoned the Souls departing, and leaving the Body, but like Lightning breaking from a Cloud (the Body being the Soul's Priſon) yet, as ſome wicked Men, through their Ignorance, their Inconſiderateneſs, or Hardneſs of Heart, may go out of the World (as we however call it) with abundance of Quiet and Satisfaction; ſo others may more ſafely, though with greater fear, commit their Souls unto God, as unto a faithful Creator.

The Terrors of the Lord in his loving Correction, may make great, though ſuffered with a troubled Mind; this Rod may fetch out ſomething of Folly bound up in men's hearts, better than his ſupporting Staff comforting, though God is to be

be rejoyced in at all times, ſuch a ſtrong Hold as we need never to be beat out of; but when he ſeems fartheſt from us, let us try to draw nearer to him, and he will know our Souls in adverſity, and then we may urge his Pity and Compaſſions, which fail not, as at other times his bountiful Goodneſs: *Though thou hide thy Face from thy Servant in diſpleaſure, yet thy Face, Lord, will I ſeek.* They ſay the Stream runs the faſter, the farther from the Fountain-Head; and if to be rejoyced in when veiled, how much more in the brightneſs of God's Countenance! *Who will ſhew us any Good? Lord, do thou lift up the Light of thy Countenance upon us,* which ſhall make the Heart more joyful than the ſmoothneſs of Oyl, that cauſes the Face to ſhine; the great encreaſe of Corn, though that be to ſtrengthen Man's Heart too, or the overflowing Vatt burſting out with new Wine; more joyful than the abundance of theſe can make it glad; which, howe'er they give Beauty and Luſtre to the outward Aſpect, by a briſker motion in the Aiery Spirits dancing up and down in Man's Body, could they give a Gaiety of Mind alſo, as Tuneableneſs of the more organical Part, giving for a Cloud hanging upon the Brow, a more ſprightly Look, and cheerful Countenance; yet it is neither in the power of Art or Nature, ſo to gild, and make the Face to ſhine, like *Moſes*, with the light of God's Countenance, or forty days preſence. And we ſhould not make haſte at any time, when through black Fumes ariſing from a diſtempered Body or Sence, the Imagination is apt (though corrupted) to affect the Conſcience with Conceit of Evil, perhaps imaginary only, and yet the indiſpoſition expounding of it, ſuggeſts the worſt, and nothing

thing but only evil to the Man's ſelf, in a ſort of Confuſion of Thoughts, and the Man ſo bewilder'd in himſelf, accounts thoſe things perhaps the moſt black, which have no darkneſs at all in them, but from his own darkneſs of heart; and contrariwiſe, 'tis well if other real Sins are not overlook'd by him, while Fears, and Doubts, and miſerable Complaints ſeize him, falling upon him for a whole Maſs of unknown Crimes he thinks, though none it may be, till he made them ſo; and the Conceit may be ſo ſtrong and phantaſtical, as to cauſe ſome to drive hard towards Deſpair, when Melancholy ſo poſſeſſeth, and is ſo exalted, as to make one think himſelf one while to be a Beaſt, (as 'tis not altogether unlike *Nebuchadnezzar* might do, and ſo in a deep Melancholy run out to herd with his ſuppoſed Kind) and another while ſomething as irrational; and we may in theſe latter days have had as ridiculous Effects of ſome Diſtempers, in wiſe, and (out of them) ſober perſons, fanſying themſelves to be monſtrouſly big, or fearing they ſhould be broke, thinking themſelves to be Glaſs, and the like.

Some, God is pleaſed to let Satan peſter with unclean and filthy Thoughts; others, with blaſphemous ones, darted ſuddenly into the Mind, ruſhing violently, if not alſo unavoidably, often repeated over and over again in the unwilling Mind, that is haraſſed and wearied thereby, till it be dulled and almoſt confounded, deſiring to be delivered from the power of ſuch vileneſs that cauſes trouble and fainting in thoſe that do not duly conſider they are not bred in them, but injected of the evil one, and may befall both the bad and good, though perhaps chiefly the latter; and though every one may

may not be acquainted with this, many evil thoughts may ſeem to run as in a Train of Wild-Fire, and this is very uneaſie to them, eſpecially who do not reckon them to be only the Devil's Sins, but their Victory, while abhorring of them: or their patient enduring ſuch a troubled Mind. And if you would know how to diſtinguiſh between theſe, and thoſe proceeding from our own Heart, as their natural Parent, it may be obſerved that the latter (though they may ſometimes be ſuggeſted alſo by the Devil it is probable enough) come more orderly, if I may ſo ſpeak, without that horror and amazement the other are uſually accompanied with, and theſe, more properly our own, are carried on leiſurely, as with determining in ones ſelf.

Neither are thoſe perſons that foſter ſuch things in themſelves, ſo likely to complain of their often Infirmities, and bewail their weakneſs and imperfections, but rather applaud them, and themſelves for them.

Whereby can the moſt aſtoniſhing blaſphemous Thought hurt any, where it is not conſented to, but hated? It is not in our power to ſay to any Thought, perhaps effectually and authoritatively, Go, and come no more; though we may do ſomewhat to the daſhing of it, or refuſe to dwell upon it.

If then thou doſt deſire above all things to believe, to repent, and to amend; if thou ſeekeſt after God with deſire, and hungereſt after Righteouſneſs; ſhall not this be accounted to thee for ſuch? Amidſt all Temptations, though never ſo grievous to be born, may we not ſay with S. *James*, *Count them all Joy?* Or if Sorrow for them, hath

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ſomewhat filled your heart, then may we not with our Lord, pronounce you *bleſſed that mourn; for you ſhall be comforted?*

Indeed if there be any wilful known Sin thou continueſt in, 'tis time for thee to bethink thy ſelf, to conſider what a ſtrange Chriſt thou holdeſt forth to the World; for is it not as if thou waſt an Apoſtle, but a Traytor; a Preacher of Righteouſneſs, but a Caſt-away; if thou art a profeſs'd Believer, but an unfaithful Servant? But if thy Trouble be, that thou art no more troubled for thy Sins, or that thou doſt deſire Grace with no more ardency than thou doſt, or that thou lieſt under ſuch Temptations that thou canſt no more remove, than a ſick man can his bodily Diſeaſe, the pain of which would not be half ſo afflicting to thee: If this be thy Caſe, if thy Sorrow be godly, let it not repent thee; yea rather delight thy ſelf in the Lord; when in ſuch heavineſs, think upon God, who is the Salvation of the righteous, and their ſtrength in time of trouble, and will deliver them becauſe they truſt in him, and ſay unto God, though all this be come upon me, yet thou continueſt holy, O thou Worſhip of *Iſrael*; and as for me, when I am poor, and in heavineſs, thy help, O God, ſhall lift me up; wherefore I will praiſe the Name of God with a Song, and magnifie it with Thankſgiving, whoſe Wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye; but in his pleaſure is Life; ſing praiſes therefore unto the Lord, O ye Saints of his, and give thanks unto him for a remembrance of his Holineſs, ſince it becometh well the juſt to be thankful; for how excellent is his loving kindneſs! And the Children of Men may put their truſt under the ſhadow of his Wings till any

any Tyranny be over: And if thou call till thy Throat be dry, and wait till thine Eyes fail with looking unto God, and after his Salvation, Is it any more than the Saints of Old have done? And wherein *art thou any better than thy Fathers were, who truſted in him, and were holpen; who hoped in his Mercy, and were not confounded?* And if thou fear thou art caſt out of his ſight, becauſe thou ſuffereſt ſuch things, Doth any know Love or Hatred, by all that is before him? Though this we know, that if we be without Chaſtiſement, whereof all are partakers, then are we Baſtards, and not Sons; and be aſſured that he exacteth leſs of thee (if that is to be called exaction) than thy Sins deſerve, and thou art ſtill leſs than the leaſt of his Mercies, but greater than the greateſt of his Judgments: Wherefore ſay unto him, it is enough, O Lord, (though I am even conſumed by the means of thy heavy Hand, yet,) it is abundantly enough, that this comparatively light Affliction, which is but for a moment, ſhall work out for me an exceeding, even an Eternal weight of glory; for *I know that thou doſt not willingly afflict nor grieve the Children of Men, but of very faithfulneſs doſt cauſe to be troubled.*

It is very dangerous to be paſt feeling, but a good ſign if when you ſearch your Wounds, they cauſe you to be ſenſible of pain.

If Conſcience magnifie it ſelf againſt you, (as ſome with that Father may fear what pleaſes them, and fear again what goes againſt them,) you may know that as it is a great *Indicium*, or Mark of a brawny Conſtitution, and hardned Sinner, not to be touch'd with a ſenſe of more groſs Enormities: So no leſs of an Heart of Fleſh, to relent at, and mourn

mourn ſorely for the Frailties of Humane Life; not only which alone, (though every wilful Sin be in its own Nature damnable,) but more palpable thick Works of Darkneſs may be blotted out as a thick Cloud; ſuch as come up rank in the Noſtrils of Men, and are of ill ſavour; ſome of the moſt open Prophaneneſs, as well as moſt cloſely contrived Hypocriſie, ſcarce to be diſcerned of Men; Sins of the firſt magnitude, deformed Monſters among Sins, even the Body of Sin, as well as the Shadow or more ſubtile Appearance; and as the Shadow may ſeem bigger and more terrible than the Body that caſts it; ſo may the dreadful apprehenſion of ſome Sins while unacted, be more lively impreſſed on the Souls of ſome Men, than the Sins when committed by others. But then, though where Sin did abound, God can make Grace much more to abound: We muſt avoid thoſe occaſions of Sin, or cut them off, which the Devil, or our own Evil Heart, or our Spirit of Infirmity does preſent, or is ready to imbrace, being preſented by the Tempter, (who uſes to hide all the ſhame and diſgrace, the puniſhment and horrour (or fearful looking for it) till the Sin be acted, ſhewing only the gilded outſide, Pleaſure, Profit, *&c.*) for though we may keep Fire from combuſtible matter; yet when together, 'tis not in our power to hinder the Spark fallen on the Tinder to burn, and you know how great a Fire one Spark kindleth: Little Sins, like little Wedges, make way for great ones; and we may ſuddenly be catch'd up in what we did never deſign to do, till opportunity invited. Neither Holy *David*, (where he had yet almoſt loſt the Title of Holy,) nor St. *Peter*, might premeditately reſolve upon their Sin, till the occaſions,

ſions, ſeeing or fearing, prompted to acting and denying. *Achan* might never determine with himſelf to take a Golden Wedge, till he ſaw it; but being offer'd to his Eye, he then was prompted to hide it: But Men's Sins find them out, and then they are not able to look up: For what can ſupport a Man in Miſery, but God's Face and Favour, and the comfort of a Good Conſcience? And therefore *a wounded Spirit, who can bear?* though the Spirit of a Man will bear his Infirmity.

If then we forſake our God, caſting him behind our back, and make Shipwrack of a Good Conſcience: As 'tis ſaid, concerning Men under the loſs of Patience, *Woe unto us, for what ſhall we do when the Lord ſhall viſit us?* With what ſhyneſs, if at all, ſhall we then be apt to fly unto him to hide us, at ſuch time as the ſtorm falleth upon us! How hardly ſhall we be able to lift up our Heads, or to look up, being afraid to run unto God for ſhelter, when more afraid of him than the preſent danger and diſtreſs!

Now Faith unfeigned, and Hope, purifying Hope, and Patience in well doing, (though ſuffering Evil for it) and the reſt of the Graces of God's Holy Spirit, will keep and defend Men in dangers; for Faith has quenched *the Violence of Fire, and ſtopped the Mouths of Lyons*, has fought with wild Beaſts, and will not ſuffer to be overcome of brutiſh Paſſions or Affections; or if overtaken in a Fault, it will make a Man ſay, I will *go and Sin no more*; but ſo far from making us ſit ſtill, ſhould it be, if we find that we have gone wrong, out of the way of the Commandment, that it ſhould rather cauſe us to try to redeem the loſt time, make us get up to be doing, and to double our diligence,

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to quicken our pace, having gone ſo far in a wrong way, having ſo many weary ſteps to be untrod again: For though when *God with rebukes doth chaſten Man for Sin, he maketh his Beauty to conſume away, like as it were a Moth fretting of a Garment*; yet when his Hand preſſeth ſorely, it is not ſo to bring down our Heart through heavineſs, as to unfit us for our Duty; but rather to quicken us in it, and excite us to it; and therefore that (whatſoever it be which ſpringeth up in us, and as a root of bitterneſs ſo troubles us, as to hinder our Religious Performances, or cauſe them to be done without Life and Vigour) is ſhrewdly to be ſuſpected to come of Evil; becauſe it does not Anſwer the end of God's loving correction; who corrects, that he might afterward receive and comfort, that his loving correction might make us great, and not ſwallow us up quick.

Wherefore, *as he that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, and muſt alſo add to this Faith, Vertue; ſo let him likewiſe add to his Vertue, Knowledge; without which, it is not good that the Soul ſhould be, as well as not ſafe for thee to lean too much to thine own Underſtanding, to be wilfully addicted, ſo to enthral thy Wiſdom, keeping it in unrighteouſneſs, making Truth a Priſoner to thy Paſſion or Affection: *Grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; for if the Underſtanding leads wrong, that draws the Will and Affections after it; and for want of ſound Knowledge 'tis eaſie or Natural enough to make Religion a ſcorn to others, and a burden to our ſelves, when diverſe and different effects are produced; not only in different and diverſe, but the

ſame Perſon; ſometime a ſuperſtitious ſcruple ariſing, as if nothing almoſt was lawful; and another a prophane or ſluggiſh negligence, as if every thing was ſo; one while making Conſcience of that which has no fear in it, and anon making bold with the Commandment; as one wears off, the other ſucceeding: Thus the Devil caſt the Lunatick in the Goſpel, now into the Fire, and by and by into the contrary Element, the Water.

And an injudicious Perſon is a Troubler of our *Iſrael*; the Church may have not only ſuffered by the Perſecution of her Enemies; but alſo very much through the indiſcretion of her Friends; while one has a ſtrange Fancy, another a particular Humour, and a third an unwarrantable Paſſion for her; that like mettleſomeneſs in a fiery Horſe which is blind, may diſorder a whole Troop of regular and well-ordered Men.

Without having our Senſes exerciſed in diſcerning aright, 'tis eaſie to tranſgreſs the Laws of Charity and Sobriety, to run Religion out into languiſhing, to ſpin out Faith into vain credulity, to enlarge degenerate Hope into the Confines of Preſumption; we may miſtake ſtupidity, for Chriſtian patience; and a wilful obſtinacy, for true conſtancy of Mind; when once the God of this World has blinded the Eyes of it, whoſe Kingdom is ſet up in Darkneſs; for he that walketh in the Night, knoweth not whither he goeth: Wherefore take heed of confounding them; or putting Light for Darkneſs, and Darkneſs for Light, leaſt thou ſoon call Good, Evil, and Evil, Good, and bound yet more and more in ignorance, inſtead of knowledge; and approve the things which God doth no where allow, for things moſt excellent;

and rather dread the Divine Power, than love it, that loveth Judgment; and together with that, fear every thing elſe; the very Dark, if but an empty meer Privation, a Sound, and no leſs a deep Silence, (as though thou didſt worſhip and adore Fear, as if it was a Notional Deity,) and boundleſs Fear be extended beyond the Grave, to Immortal Ills, not ſuffering Damnation even here to ſlumber; as if the Gates of Hell did open wide themſelves, and preſent to view *Stygian* Lakes, ghaſtly Spectres, horrid and frightful Shapes, fantaſtical Gloomineſs, and a bottomleſs Pit, top full of Miſeries and Woes, leſt thou torment thy ſelf, though in vain; as if inuring to Pain and Torture, as if fitting and preparing for that blackneſs of Darkneſs for ever, where the Fearful ſhall have their part with the Unbelievers. Wherefore ſhew thy ſelf manly; indeed very Fear it ſelf when it poſſeſſes, is like a ſtrong Man armed, in this, ſtill to keep poſſeſſion, and ſurprizing Fear may make a Man do bold things; and ſo unreaſonably Tyrannical is it, as to make one fear, where no fear is; as much as though ſurrounded with the greateſt dangers; ſuch is its more than Effeminacy, making a Man run to God, (though afraid of him at the ſame time,) in a compound and huddle of miſmatch'd Paſſions, that will make one pray indeed, but with a faultering Tongue, with a miſ-giving Heart: This Incenſe is offered up with a trembling Hand, the Man being rid and over-aw'd, till he grows ſo weary of the Scruples he has raiſed and imbraced about a Deity, that he would perhaps willingly (was he not afraid to do ſo) quit all anxious thoughts and care about one, if not alſo rejoice to become Atheiſt, upon that condition he

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could but overcome his Fears; ſuch is a worſhipper of God againſt his Will. Whereas true Religion is the great imbelliſhment, and enobling of a Man's Soul, when it is unmix'd, pure, and ſimple, without ſuch baſe allay; when it does not run wild too much, having made the Man mad, as overmuch righteouſneſs tends to it, and (as the beſt things, when corrupted, become the worſt of all) a Religious Frenzy, may be the moſt miſchievous, the moſt incurable, and ungovernable one, without bounds of Moderation, having once leaped over the Golden Mean of true temperate Piety, painting Religion with ſo ill and unpleaſant an Aſpect, ſuch harſh looks, ſo grim, ſo hard, and cold a countenance, ſo ſullen an Eye, as an auſtere Miſtreſs, or a tormenting Fury; which, could it be repreſented in a bodily ſhape in its true Symmetry and juſt Proportion, would be the moſt taking, amiable, and delightful Object in the World, would captivate by its Beauty, ſo allure and entice as to draw Men after it as with a Magnetick Force; ſo that a blind Devotionary does the greateſt injury to what he ſo carefully ſeeks to promote, and ſo earneſtly contends for, true genuine Faith, ſound Doctrine, and an Holy Life; while ſo ſervile in his Fear, ſo ſlaved in his Obſervances, ſo ſcrupulous in all things, ſo devout in his Impiety, holding forth ſuch a ſtrange and uncouth form of Godlineſs, giving out ſo ill a report of it, as if a Man muſt caſt off all Humanity to become a Chriſtian: Whereas Chriſtianity heightens and refines Morality, adding to its former Native Beauty and Luſtre, as though by a ſtrong reflection, more than doubling its Rays.

The thoughts of the vain Religionary (who does Ape true Devotion) are tuned to the rumi-

nating on Hell and Damnation, more than the Joys of Heaven; his Eye is not ſet on the recompence of Reward, nor fix'd on the Joy ſet before him, that he might run with patience and cheerfulneſs in hopes of Glory; but (being ſo generally in the Mount of Straits) he rather acts like a Man in a fright, only to eſcape the danger he is in; and, as many times ſuch do, may take the worſt courſe to ſave himſelf harmleſs; not but that he takes up his Croſs, and Crucifyeth himſelf, dayly; uſes many and many endeavours; is at abundance of pains to get to Heaven, by conſequence, in trying to avoid Hell; like as a Man may be more anxious and doubtful, more wearied and careful, in a bye, croſs, rugged and wrong way; than he that keeps the High Road, the right and ſtraighteſt Line, being the ſhorteſt of all; I ſay, not but that the blind Devotee mortifies and almoſt kills himſelf, with ſuch things, as who but himſelf has required at his Hands, in the exceſs? he faſts, he prays, and is inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon; he exerciſes himſelf in acts of the ſevereſt Piety or Mortification; he makes Chriſt's Yoke uneaſie, and his burden heavy; he makes God's Service, that is perfect Freedom, rather perfect Slavery and Bondage; for what he does that is ſeemingly Religious, he does out of Scruple, or out of Cuſtom, not Devotion only, (being ſlaviſhly afraid of God, rather than bearing true Filial Fear towards him;) for ſuch things are grievous unto him; but he cannot quietly diſpenſe with, and ſatisfie himſelf in the omiſſion of them, though glad when they are over, having no ſuch poynant pleaſure in the ways of Godlineſs; acts of Devotion go off without relish, are very flat and inſipid, if not more ungrateful

unto him. And whereas ſome Paſſions of the Mind may rather exalt a Man than depreſs and keep low, lift him up and carry him above himſelf, making him appear more gay, more prompt and erect, whet and point his Wit, ſet a true Gloſs upon his Actions, (though indeed generally our Paſſions, of themſelves, good Endowments of the Mind, are carried on to ſuch indecency as to blind it rather;) I ſay, though ſome innocent Paſſions may give a competent Boldneſs, a good Aſſurance, or true Bravery of Mind; yet a bigotted Religionary's Dread and vain Fear, which is equally deſtitute perhaps of Reaſon and Fortitude, does ſtupifie and benumb: this, of all Fears, ſo dozes and confounds, improving every little diſaſter and contingency into a Judicial Vengeance, turning the moſt ordinary and common Misfortunes of Humane Life into fatal Tragedies; like Heathen and rude Antiquity in their diſtemper'd and frightful Conceits, productive of ſo mean and low thoughts, as do debaſe and upbraid the very corrupted Nature of Man, which cannot be too, without the ſuper adding unworthy apprehenſions of a Divine Power, not only deſtructive of the ſenſe of God's Goodneſs, but over and above uſhering in a vile perſwaſion of his Cruelty, as though ſo ſowre and vindictive, that the World (if it was poſſible ſo to be at all) would be better and happier without any ſuch Super-intendent Being; though indeed, could all things ſtand as they now do, being created and upheld by the Word of his Power, without the ſame Providence to uphold them, Would not a God be the one thing to be deſired, more than the Sun in the Firmament of Heaven, that enlightens and revives whereſoever it does ariſe, the ſetting

or but winking of which leaves all in horrour? Men, I ſay, had better be without the Sun, than without God (which enlightens it) in the World.

Wherefore 'tis ſad and lamentable, and may call for a double Portion of our Pity, to ſee ſome ſo unhappy, as to deprive themſelves of the greateſt Good, (I might have ſaid alſo the only one,) to miſtake and miſtruſt their beſt and ſureſt Friend, to tremble at their Benign Patron, whoſe Courts they tread, though the very Altars give them no Sanctuary; nay, rather how dreadful is this place above all others! which, if it afford no relief, becomes a place of Torment; for there the Soul is chaſtiſed, ſo that it may ſeem merciful to hale it thence; the ignorance indeed is great and to be pityed, in thoſe who are cruel to themſelves; 'tis ſad to ſee Men ſo witty to invent new Torments to themſelves, as though they had no other Enemy in the World, or as though they meant to prevent the Grand Enemy and Tormentor of Souls; and to do this in ſpight of remedy, any ſpiritual one I mean; for no Balm of *Gilead*, no Wine or Oyl poured into their Wounds can either cleanſe or heal among the number of thoſe Melancholick Perſons, who will diſpute, learnedly diſpute themſelves miſerable, turning all Ghoſtly Comfort into a deceitful Propheſying of ſmooth things unto them: Thus may good and wholeſome Food be made to nouriſh a Diſeaſe, when it is ſo prevalent and predominant in the Body, that like as the Sea turns other Liquors, it inſinuates it ſelf till it overpowers and takes away the Nature thereof, converting it to its own.

Again, after an ineffectual helpleſs pity, another while how ſhall we forbear chiding? To ſee

Men

Men ſo deaf to all Inſtruction, ſo blind and ſlow of heart to underſtand all that is written; to ſee ſtrong men ſo more than childiſh, to behold aged men ſo long ſeeking Wiſdom, not yet to have found it; but ſtill remaining deſtitute of common Knowledge, wallowing in ſuch Miſtakes of the greateſt ill conſequence, that even Nature beſotted might bluſh to own? Yet as though they erred in their Heart, more than in their Mind and Underſtanding; as though they had received the Untruth together with a love of it; having once loved this their own, they love it to the end; ſuch is the perverſeneſs of a Man, whoſe *Imaginations are evil from his youth*; and as though, like ſome bodily Diſeaſe, it ran in the Blood, their Poſterity praiſe their Saying.

Indeed Men's ignorance, and unacquaintedneſs with the Power above, may ſeem very readily, if not naturally, to run in two ſtreams; in harder Tempers it may tend to produce Atheiſm; in the more tender and flexible, it begets a ſuperſtitious Dread, a diſtempered Opinion, or Conceit rather, productive of ſo mean and abject Apprehenſions, ſuch low Thoughts, as though ignorant as a Beaſt before God, debaſing and breaking of Mens Spirits, in a truly baſe and ignoble Paſſion, that chaſes away Sleep, or terrifies with Dreams, griping and laſhing with ſevere ſtrokes like an angry howling Fury, or ſuppoſed *Incubus* of the Night, ſuch Mens Reaſon being always aſleep, but their Fears always awake; nor have ſuch, when waking, enough ſenſe to ſlight and ſmile at all this; who, if to chuſe one for themſelves, what God could they feign to themſelves that would not ſeem terrible unto them, that dread their Guardian, and trem-

ble at their Preſerver and Keeper? Are not ſuch only prepared by paſt Calamities, to expect greater? Their Mind being depraved in its brighteſt Eye, beholding the faireſt Object.

And if we conſider ſuch at their beſt, in their moſt temperate Devotion, do we not find them, as it were, becharmed, and like Men in a Spell? *Pythagoras* would ſay, we are beſt when we come near the Gods: indeed ſuch is he whom we adore, that who need ever go from his Preſence unrefreſh'd?

And if he who holds there is no God, be guilty of Impiety, is not he that repreſents him amiſs, more guilty in a ſort? I had rather, ſays *Plutarch*, Men ſhould ſay of me, There never was ſuch a Man as *Plutarch*, than ſay, He was an ill Man. Which is leſs impious, to ſay, God is not the King of Heaven and Earth, or to ſay, he is but a tyrannical One, and that he delights in the Miſery and Deſtruction of his People? Had not a Man better have no Sentiments at all of him, than to have no milder than ſuch unbecoming ones, ſo unworthy of him? Does he that ſays, God is not, ſay any evil of him; foraſmuch as what is not, can neither be good nor bad? But to acknowledge him to be God, (a Word that carries all that is good in it,) by reflecting upon his Honour, (which he is very jealous of,) is not ſuch an one both ſeemingly pious, and wicked; pious, in the Faith of him, and wicked, in the Belief concerning him? And is it a Sin to ſpeak amiſs of God; and is it not to think ſo of him? Is not thinking the cauſe of ſpeaking ill? And what is like to be the immediate natural conſequence of fanſying the Divine Power fretful, cruel, and revengeful? Muſt not

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all who embrace this, or give Birth to ſuch a Thought, inſtead of fearing and loving him, be rather inclined to the fearing and hating? And Panick Fear is a very bad Councellor, an ill Guide, and Director.

Doubt not but if thou order thy Converſation aright, thou ſhalt ſee the Salvation of God, that he will ſhew it thee: Believe, that if thou ſeekeſt after God, thy ſoul ſhall live; and be not ſo cramp'd with fantaſtical fear, as that when thou wouldeſt be pleaſant, thy *Genius* ſhould check thee, and cauſe thy knees to ſmite each other amidſt thy Banqueting; ſuffer not a dark and thick Cloud, raiſed in thy own Breaſt, to hurry thee away headlong with the Tempeſt of the ſame, (like a mighty ruſhing Wind in a Storm, that will ſuffer nothing elſe to be heard for its own Loudneſs) leſt diſtraction ſeize thee, and make thee weary of thy Life, and yet afraid to die, leſt a whole Deluge of Vengeance be poured upon thee; this is like to be the dire effect of Superſtition in the minute Appendages thereof. Not that we can, ſtrictly ſpeaking, be too dutiful to God, where it indeed remains Duty; thus we cannot love God too much, *&c.*

But ſome Things, ſome Performances good in themſelves, and required in the general, may be hurtfully done where they ceaſe to be our Duty; thus may a Man gad abroad, though it be to religious Exerciſe, if it become but a religious Truanting, to the utter neglect of his ſecular buſineſs in its proper time of being done, whereby he needleſly diſabling himſelf for the providing things neceſſary for his own Houſe, had need take care of being not branded by the Apoſtle with infidelity,

or

or ſomething worſe, denying of the Faith. Not but that the more God is in our Thoughts, the better, where our Deſires run after him, and our hearts are lifted up unto him in worldly Affairs, thus ſpiritualizing them every day; for God did not ſanctifie and ſet apart one day in ſeven to the *Jews*, that he might be forgotten of them all the Week beſide; ſo again, on the other hand, the very Sabbath was capable of being ſuperſtitiouſly obſerved, witneſs our Lords Rebuke concerning the obſervation thereof; and ſtill while thou remembereſt to keep holy the Lord's Day, do not forget this, That the very Sabbath it ſelf was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath: Wherefore take heed thou preferr not Sacrifice before Mercy; for as he is a Murderer who killeth himſelf wilfully; ſo why not he alſo cruel and unmerciful, that is in a leſs degree ſo to himſelf? (Neceſſary Mortification is done in Mercy, ſince it is to prevent the utter deſtruction both of Soul and Body in Hell; for the Body muſt partake of the Miſery the Soul brings upon it;) wherefore I dare not condemn thoſe, who after the proper Duty of the Lord's Day done, I mean a Morning and Evening well-dreſs'd Chriſtian Sacrifice offer'd up as Incenſe, and a good Digeſtion of the Word heard, do other things occaſionally neceſſary, or knowing their own Chriſtian Liberty, do take more freedom in the uſe of it in lawful Refreſhments, (for which yet others might count them profane) for be the Spirit never ſo willing, ſo long as in this Body of Clay, 'tis clogg'd with Infirmities; it will languiſh and deaden without ſome groſſer ſort of refreſhment, even ſuch as belongs more properly to the Body, that more dreggy part, which,

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if wearied out, and diſordered by the Soul's neglect of it, (as by a long, tedious, intemperate Act of Devotion, it may) the Service of God becomes irkſome, which ſhould by all means imaginable be made eaſie and pleaſant unto us, it being of it ſelf perfect freedom; we ought not to lay a Burden upon the day of reſt, ſuch as neither we, nor our Fathers (which might be better than we) were able to bear; nor to make men cry out of the *Burden of the Lord*; and *when will the Sabbath* (as ſome through Miſtake, are apt to call it) *be over?* nor to make a Day of rejoycing to Man-ſervant, Maid-ſervant, Cattel, and Stranger, the moſt tireſome of all Days, ſo as that they ſhould wiſh in the Morning it was Evening; as if we *Judaize* upon it, we may at laſt with the *Jews*, be brought to diſpute the Lawfulneſs of killing any creeping thing on our Day of Reſt, to reſiſt an Enemy, or to quench a burning, or any other things which the *Jews* themſelves were no way obliged to make Conſcience of; our Day, which is different in point of Time, from the *Jewiſh* Sabbath, as well as in reſpect of the Duty thereof; the *Jews* kept the Seventh Day as a Commemoration, or Feaſt of the World's Nativity, or for other temporary Reaſon: And though I do not think one Day in ſeven too much to be ſet apart for the more publick Worſhip, and ſolemn, divine Service of God; yet ſome may have thought (perhaps very reaſonably too) that neither one day in ſeven, nor ten, nor twenty, is moral, ſo as that Natural Religion it ſelf would teach it; but only that it is ſo, one ſet Time ſhould be conſecrated, and ſet apart to that purpoſe.

And whereas ſome may be apt to ſay, the Lord's Day ſprang out of the Sabbath; the Sabbath indeed was quite abrogated, and the Lord's Day of meer Eccleſiaſtical Inſtitution, a diff rent, and quite a new thing, as the Learned may think on that Point.

And howe'er ſome may reckon they celebrate the Lord's Day in comely order, if they are but idle enough; yet Antiquity might judge much otherwiſe, accounting the doing ſome Profitable Work on that day, better than being altogether unprofitably idle.

If we are to unbend our Thoughts, and to take them off from the Hurry and Buſineſs of other Days, it is then that we may the better attend the one thing neceſſary, and not to let our Mind and Thoughts, wound up all the Week beſide, now to be perfectly without any motion at all, like a Watch quite run down; or to think as little as is conſiſtent with our Frame and Nature.

The Devil may do a great deal of Miſchief when turned into an Angel of Light; and one may as effectually err in a good Road, as in a bad; and if unskilful in the way, go wrong in the Meridian Sun; which yet will guide ſo, as for the Man to walk on ſeeing, though not knowing whither he goeth; but he that walketh, though the ſame way, in Darkneſs, is more apt to be afraid, though he knows the way to be good and ſafe; nevertheleſs, though I am ſometime afraid, (ſays the Pſalmiſt) *yet put I my truſt in thee.* And ſee that you neglect not to uſe the proper Means of Comfort, God's Word, and wait on thoſe times of refreſhing, publick Adminiſtration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Thus try to ſtrengthen

then thine own Heart, that thou may'ſt be ſtrong in the Lord and in the Power of his might; but if thou cut the Bough thou ſtandeſt on, no wonder if thou falleſt, and art ſo unable to riſe; though if thou faint in the Day of Adverſity, thy ſtrength is ſmall. They are the moſt Glorious Luminaries of Heaven that are ſometimes Eclipſed unto us, but by keeping on their wonted courſe, they ſoon work out of them again, and may ſeem to ſhine with greater Glory and Luſtre; and though we ſay the Sun ſometimes lies under a Cloud, we know it is above it.

We muſt in Scripture ſenſe be born again; miſtake not then what may be a Throe of Chriſt forming in thee; thy Spiritual Pangs may help forward the Spiritual Deliverance: Wherefore do not take Evil up upon truſt only, and become twice unhappy: Do not Fight as one beating the Air, beſtowing many a blow on a Shadow, an Appearance only; as the very ſhadow of what is venomous may ſeem bigger and more formidable than the Body that caſts it: Do not anticipate what is never like to be; nor be needleſly affrighted afar off with any temporal danger, as with a glittering Sword, that cuts the Heart before it comes nigh: Do not raiſe Afflictions out of the duſt, creating Troubles to thy ſelf anew, thereby waſting that ſtrength and force that ſhould be more fully bent againſt our Arch Enemy. How many may muſter up a whole Army of Imaginary Evils, till they make themſelves really miſerable; and like a ſort of People, when to Fight, paint them, making them appear more terrible and aſtoniſhing by the force their fancy gives them, drawing them out (like a Painter) in what Colours they pleaſe; though

though for the moſt part in black, and very much ſhaded, till they are horribly afraid of the Works of their own Hands? How many give themſelves leiſure, not only to meditate on preſent Evils, but alſo to recal and fetch back thoſe that are paſt; rubbing an old Sore when skin'd and heal'd up, for fear it was not ſearched deep enough, and then are frighted with the deformity of the Scar thereof? and falſe Apprehenſions may cauſe true Afflictions. Now what Man being in doubt with himſelf, whether he was in the right way or not, but would follow his Guide and Director, who told him wherein he erred, and which way he ought now to go, rather than lean to his own Gueſs and Fancy, ſaying, methinks that is not the right way?

In Sickneſs we can truſt our Lives with the Phyſician of the Body; like as in matters of Eſtate, we commit our buſineſs to the Learned in the Law; but yet will be our own Preſcribers in Things Divine, which perhaps we go as unskilfully about as we ſhould Law Matters or Phyſical Preparations; though the Conſequent may be more fatal, than a Miſcarriage or Errour about the Body or Eſtate.

We allow every Mechanick to know his own Art beſt, and will not preſume to direct ſuch in it; but in Spiritual Matters we will teach our Teachers. And may not ſome as to Temporal diſquieting in vain, as if they would be troubled once for all, (but that a laſting and perpetual once,) ſeem to bear all their Afflictions almoſt at the ſame time, keeping and making preſent, paſt ones, and antedating thoſe to come, mixing them with the inſtant Evil they lie under? Now would they bear one after another, taking them in that order they were in themſelves placed, they might be

be lighter and much eaſier: But if Men make the fear of Evil, as great as the Evil they fear; and that which Reaſon could not ſo much as ſuggeſt unto them, meet half way, by a fearful expectation, ſo creating trouble to themſelves; Would not ſome think ſuch thought it made too ſlow haſte, and did not come faſt enough towards them, that they ſo poſted up unto it, taking it by the hand as a Friend to conduct home along with them? Rather ſpare thy ſelf, and if thou doſt not get Exemption by this means, perfect Freedom from Evil, yet may'ſt thou thus be reprieved from it, and God may keep away what we truſt him wholly with the diſpoſal and courſe of: *Commit thy ways unto the Lord, that thy thoughts may be eſtabliſhed; who will keep them in perfect Peace, whoſe Minds are ſtayed on him.* Say therefore with the Apoſtle, *The Lord ſhall deliver me from every evil Work, and will preſerve me unto his Heavenly Kingdom*: And if I am to be made more perfect through ſuffering, (for Heaven is the Reward of them that ſuffer Evil for Chriſt's ſake, as well as the Reward of Good Works,) God will give Beauty, for Aſhes; the Oyl of Joy, for Mourning; and the Garments of Praiſe, for the Spirit of Heavineſs: But ſhew not thy ſelf froward, like ſtubborn Children when led whither they would not, who fall down wilfully, and refuſe to riſe, or be lifted up: Let not *Iſſachar*'s Fate light on thee, to couch ſo under thy Burden: If like *Jordan* over-flowing its Banks, Sorrow ſwells and runs over, or becomes as the Waves of the Sea, roaring horribly, we know that when it is troubled and cannot reſt, it caſts up Mire and Dirt; and troubled Waters repreſent the Face of Things all ſhattered and broken, or very

very imperfectly: Wherefore ſay with *David*, *At what time I am afraid, I will truſt in thee, that when oppreſſed, he may undertake for thee; caſt thy Burden upon the Lord, and he ſhall ſuſtain thee.* But when the Heavens are over-ſpread with Clouds and thick Darkneſs, when no Sun or Stars appear, 'tis no time to go upon diſcovery: Till there be a lightſomneſs within thee, thou may'ſt miſtake while thou remaineſt Blind, and thy Reaſon clouded and hoodwink'd; like as the *Syrians* thought they were in the way to the Prophet, when they were caught up in the midſt of *Samaria*.

What ſuch wonder if the Devil tempt thee to think thou belongeſt not unto God; ſince we find him coming to our Lord himſelf, who was the very Son of God's Eſſence, with an, *if thou be the Son of God*; as though, if poſſible, to raiſe a doubt whether he was ſo or not? and it may be a common method with *Satan* ſtill, thus to tempt many true Believers, who are God's Children by Adoption and Grace.

It is no new thing for the Devil to ſift Men like Wheat, or try to the utmoſt; but if upon the firſt caſting the moſt equal Weights into the moſt juſt and even Balances, there will be a breaking of the Beam on both ſides, and ſo a ſeeming inequality, till poized a little, and it can come to ſettle; ſay not thou, *I am weighed and am found wanting*, (before that thou canſt recover thy Spiritual ſtrength,) and ſo moap out a Being; but rather, together with Sin from thy Fleſh, remove Sorrow from thine Heart; and when thy Feet are well nigh ſlipping, take God's Word for a Lanthorn unto thee, for a Light unto thy Paths, which is proper in dark and ſlippery Ways, and makes them not

only

only more ſafe, but alſo more comfortable. They are the ſharpeſt Edges and Points that are ſooneſt turned or broken; the fineſt Garments are eaſily rent with any thing almoſt faſtning upon them, eſpecially if there be any the leaſt flaw in them to be laid hold on.

Wherefore, if perſecuted by *Satan*, learn to think thy ſelf not forſaken; if perplexed, not to deſpair.

Some may have dyed of fancy, being perſwaded they were mortally wounded: The faireſt Mark is ſooneſt hit: A Pyrate will leave off purſuing an empty Veſſel, to follow one that is richly laden. Indeed, what need the Devil purſue after ſuch as will leave all to follow him? Why ſhould he terrifie his own Subjects that fight for him under his Banner, that do his Work; and being perverted, ſtrengthen their Brethren? What need the Devil at all tempt them, almoſt, to do Evil, who do it ſo earneſtly with both Hands, and to whom it is ſo delightful, as that it might not poſſibly be in his power, ſhould he endeavour it what he could, to keep them back from ſinning, *as it were with a Cart-rope*, (as the Prophet ſpeaks) *drawing Iniquity with Cords of Vanity?*

Again, that which will cure a Sick Man, may make a Man in better Health, ſick. The Devil may perſwade many to ſuſpect their condition, that there is no whole part in them, though broken for Sin; and in the dark Night of Temptation, Men may grope in the right way, and think every Straw, a Serpent; and a cragged, broken Rock, to be an Helliſh Monſter: But *when the Day-ſpring from on High doth viſit, to give Light to them that ſit in Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death*; it preſently

ſently guides their Feet into the way of Peace; and they can walk the ſame way over again, without the leaſt dread of danger, wondering at what they ſo ſtumbled, and had almoſt fallen.

Thus a skilful Pilote is put hard to it in a Storm. But though Men's Souls (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks) refuſe all manner of comfort; yet good and wholeſome Food may nouriſh, if taken down into the Stomach, though the Palate be ſo vitiated with Sickneſs, as that it cannot, in its paſſage, taſte the pleaſantneſs of it; as if any thing be reliſhed by that, when ſo diſorder'd, 'tis like to be nothing ſo much perhaps as what is deſtructive. Who can Judge aright between one colour and another, in the dark? Between the redneſs of Crimſon or Scarlet, and the whiteneſs of Wool? If a broken Spirit dryeth the Bones, is there no Balm in *Gilead?* Our Lord is excellent at the compoſing and ſetting of a broken Heart; nor does he deſpiſe any that is broken for Sin, or ſhattered only in the breaking off from it, to which formerly glewed and cemented; or if there be no cauſe for ſuch heart-breaking, it being only a buffetting of *Satan*, a Scruple (as the Word properly ſignifies) in the Shooe of a Traveller, a Traveller to the Heavenly *Jeruſalem*, to make him loſe time in ſitting down to take it out; if it be only a *Remora* to retard, a ſtumbling-block caſt by *Satan* in the way, then know, that a weak Chriſtian, who may be compared to a weary and uneaſie Traveller on the Road, is as a Man going to a City, by reaſon of the unevenneſs of the way leading to which, ſometimes riſing, and mountainous, ſometimes doleful, hollow, and in a Bottom; one while he has a fair and clear proſpect of the City he is bound for, and makes towards; and another has it

it hid from his Eyes, as though he had turned his back upon it, and was going the contrary way; ſo that he begins to doubt, and diſquiet himſelf, for fear he ſhould be going wrong; though indeed he is now nearer to the place he would be at, when he cannot diſcern it, than when he rejoyced and went pleaſantly on to ſee it plainly before him. Thus the Sun may be up, and not ſhine; nay, higher towards the Meridian, and not appear ſo bright as in the Morning; but whether it ſhines or not, it may influence; and ſo may the Moon or Stars, even in the darkeſt Night.

Evil Thoughts.

THough it is not ſo pleaſant to be clouded in Mind, or peſter'd with Evil Thoughts, that ſo darken Joy, and in Melancholick Perſons may be ſo wire-drawn and ſpun out at length, as to take up abundance of their time unprofitably enough, and drink or dry up Men's Spirits mightily; though they are not always ſo conſonant and agreeable to themſelves as to be of one piece, drawing one another after them coherently, like links of the ſame Chain; but rather are like uneven ſtringing a Bracelet on the ſame thread; or as a Crowd preſſing through a narrow Gate, hindering and treading one upon another.

Thoughts ſometimes ſwarm, ſpring like a Mine in ſome, though for the generality they are to be wound up, and made to go more ſteadily: And we are to watch narrowly the very Beatings, the firſt Motions, and moſt retired Thoughts, ſpringing from the deepeſt and cloſeſt receſs of our own Heart, and to take heed that we become not vain in our Imaginations, leſt God give us up to vile Affections, and to our Evil Heart, (like a nauſeous Common-ſhore, bubbling and belching forth its own loathſome ſtench,) always ſuming and reaking out its own filth and naughtineſs: For the Mind of Man is ſo reſtleſs as not to be perhaps at any time perfectly idle, but working upon ſomewhat, though, like a Mill that is not ſupplyed and fed, it grind it ſelf: And where there is not a Spiritual Watch ſet, to keep the Door of the Heart, as Holy *David* ſpeaks of guarding the Lips; where there is not a ſtrait rein, and a ſtrict hand upon it to give check to any exorbitancy and laſhing out; there this is the Natural product, Evil; if not only Evil, Evil continually, *Out of the Heart proceed Evil Thoughts*, &c.

'Tis the Character given of the Wicked, that *God is not in all his Thoughts*: and ſo again of the Godly Man, that *he Night and Day meditates on nothing more*; by which means Evil Thoughts (which are ſo apt to intrude upon us) are foreſtalled and prevented, the Mind is prepoſſeſſed, wholly taken up, is already full; and no Man can be intent upon two contrary things at the ſame time, Good and Evil, any more than darkneſs can ſtill remain to fill that place, upon which the Sun is riſen. However, while muſing, the Heart being ſtored with good matter, glowing and waxing hot within,

Carnal

Carnal Thoughts (if they do preſent themſelves) being of ſo contrary a Nature, to what is now, by a little converſation with them, become ſo delightful, may grow unpleaſant even to diſtaſte, when the Man is firſt ſeaſon'd with better things. Thus, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *I hate vain Thoughts, but thy Law do I love:* where by the Antitheſis, he may ſeem to make the love to vain Thoughts, inconſiſtent with the love to God's Law.

Indeed, Thoughts, with allowance and approbation, are at the leaſt a tendency to Acts; and though we have not Windows in our Breaſt to diſcover them ſo as that they may be ſeen of Men; yet they are not to be told him that made the Heart; for in the *Pſalmiſt*'s Logick, *he that made the Eye, ſhall not he ſee?* Though in tracing them, (which tread ſo light, as ſometimes to leave no Footſteps behind,) they lying ſo confuſed, it may be hard taking a perfect view of them in order, and to ſpeak diſtinctly, of what ariſe ſo promiſcuouſly, as Thoughts and Imaginations do, without obſerving any Laws of Tranſition; yet we may conſider their inconſtancy and ſlipperineſs, running to and fro, from one end of the Earth to the other in a moment; from the higheſt Heaven, to the deepeſt receſs of Darkneſs, with the next turn of the Heart; How they ſometimes ſtand and look like Strangers one upon another, till they periſh in the thinking, become Abortive! How they ſometimes run as it were up and down in us, then wander like Straglers, ſo unwearied in their Motion, centering no where, roving, frequent in remove! And is it not ſtrange to obſerve what impertinent, incoherent, as well as ſudden Diſcurſions are made from good to bad? And 'tis well

if we are not accompanyed, haunted, or purſued with ſome thoughts of fooliſhneſs, every where, in every performance; which do offer themſelves even at the very Altar, there like Sulphur to be ſent up with our Incenſe ſo mixt and beſprinkled: But though ſo hardly to be ſhut out and utterly excluded; yet if like *Abram*, *Gen.* 15. 11. we fray them away from our Sacrifice, till a more convenient Seaſon, even for diſagreeable Good Thoughts, and always reſiſt Evil Ones, we do well; ſince none is ſo abſolute a Monarch, (though ſo ſtrong as by the ordinary Grace of God, given as of courſe, to beat down every Rebellious Thought when it ariſeth to exalt it ſelf,) none ſo Maſter of himſelf and his own Thoughts, as to ſay ſo effectually as to be ſure to be obey'd, to any, Go, and come no more; ſo Negative is Man's Power; however he may ſay to one ſometimes, Come, and he cometh. A King, that is ſtrong enough to beat down an Enemy, may not yet with all his Forces be able to prevent his Enemies in riſing againſt him; they may riſe, though to be knock'd on the Head: But we count that Enemy ſubdued, who is ſo vanquiſh'd as not to be able ever to make any conſiderable Reſiſtance or Head againſt the Conqueror: Not but that a Man may bend his Mind to muſe on what he pleaſes, and may keep pace with his Thoughts in the general; and then as a vertuous habit of doing Good, is not loſt nor deſtroyed, but rather only interrupted, ſtopt for a while, and hinder'd in its courſe of actions, by one ſingle bad one; ſo neither is the Series or Train of Thinking, of Holy and Divine Meditation, by the bold intruſion of an improper, unſeaſonable, or impertinent Thought, provided it has not our

Place,

Placet, our Vote, thus to be ſet up in our heart: But if vain and idle Imaginations have our Conſent, if we delight in them, the holy Spirit of God will be grieved and chaſed away; that will have no ſuch Inn-mate, nor dwell in a Cage of unclean Birds; and Thoughts are minted and conceived there, where the Holy Ghoſt ſhould have its Reſidence and Delight to dwell. When God calleth to Repentance, it is thus; *Jer.* 4. 14. *Waſh thy heart from wickedneſs; how long ſhall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* Lodge, and reſt there. Indeed an adulterous Thought under the Goſpel, cheriſhed with deſire, is committing Adultery. How is every Temptation almoſt faſtened? Does it not firſt make gentle Offers to the Mind? Does it not ſeem fairly to propoſe, before it ſtorms? And are not evil, deliberate evil Thoughts, enormities of high Rank and Quality? I am ſure they are Failures of the nobleſt Part of Man, the Mind, that leading Part, which ſhould guide and direct into all Truth, and not into Errour: Is not the Thought of Fooliſhneſs Sin? A Natural Conſcience will riſe againſt a Murderous Deſire. He is a Fool that ſays in his heart, *There is no God.* A Language that God underſtands very well without the help of that Interpreter, the Tongue.

Neither does God only look to the Mind and Intention, but even Man's Laws have reſpect thereunto, as in the Caſes of premeditated, malicious Murder, Man-ſlaughter, and Chance-medly; in all which, Man's Blood is ſhed, and yet not puniſhed alike in all.

The Thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, while they ſet up a Stage in their own Breaſt to act over to themſelves in their

Minds, ſending their Thoughts as Meſſengers to foreſtall and antedate the Contentment looked after at a diſtance; one ſets ſome time apart, may be, every day, to worſhip that Idol, Self; doting, and falling in love with his own Wiſdom or Wit, by gazing upon his own Excellencies or Atchievments, delighted with the ſuppoſition of Applauſe, & the Echoes of Praiſe in their mind: Anothers heart perhaps runs after an evil Covetouſneſs, and a third feeds his Adulterous Eyes full; while others are carking, and caſting about wherewithal they ſhall be cloathed; ſome capitulating with themſelves what they ſhall eat, ſacrificing themſelves to their God, the Belly, by inceſſant providing for the Flesh, to fulfil it in the Luſts thereof; others poſſibly are lulling their Souls to reſt, and to take their eaſe, by the conſideration of having Goods enough laid up for many years, though properly bodily Goods; ſome perhaps muſe vainly on their Plenty, as others on their Want: What ſhall I do? ſays the rich Man, when his Goods were encreaſed; what could the poor Man's Penury cauſe him to ſay more? How ſome may proudly meditate on their own Greatneſs, (as others on their Worth,) as if come to it by their own Sagacity or Power, like that King, *Dan.* 4. 30. Walking in the Palace of the Kingdom of *Babylon*; *Is not this Great Babylon that I have built by the might of my power?* Though God may ſometimes ſcatter the proud even in the very imagination of their heart, putting down ſuch mighty from their Seat. Do not ſome ſuffer Envy, that rottenneſs of the Bones, to grow up in them as an evil Diſeaſe, till it prey upon their Vitals, and eat as doth a Canker? Yet may not ſuch fooliſh Imaginations be laid

laid open, and expoſed in a word? For Pride bereaves the Soul of God, the chiefeſt, if not rather the only Good; Envy robs a Man of his Neighbour; Anger diſpoſſeſſes him of himſelf; Covetouſneſs deprives him of the good things of this Life, *&c.* To be ſtabb'd by our own Thoughts, to be betrayed by a venomous Off-ſpring, a poyſonous Brood nouriſhed and foſtered in our own Boſom, cheriſhed in our own Breaſt, is to be like that ſort of Viper which is kill'd by the young ones in her own Belly, that are ſaid to eat their way out.

Behold what manner of Men we ought to be in all manner of holy converſation; as a Man while he ſearcheth out his own Spirit, may be ſaid to converſe with himſelf. And how is it that our Dreams are no more there where our Converſatian ought to be, and our Affections ſet? As we are told concerning one of the Ancients, how he dreamed of St. *Paul's* appearing to him. Have we not Heaven and Glory, the great Concernments of our Soul to think on, that Vanity ſhould be ſo ruminated by us, and mix'd with the beſt Performances? Which would not be ſo common and frequent, perhaps, were we not ſo filled and taken up with ſuch vain Thoughts at other times, out of our Religious Duties and Divine Worſhip; the Bow when unſtrung, ſtill bending that way the String held it more ſtrictly.

But what if our Hearts were turn'd outward, and all our Thoughts to be read by Men, ſhould we not appear odious Creatures? And ſhall we have no reverence for the knowledge of God? *Acts* 8. 22. *Pray, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee*; for they are to be made Conſcience

ſcience of: And if we cannot be free from vain Imaginations, are they then our Burden, or are they indeed our Delight? A good Man may be peſtered with them; but then he at the ſame time hates them with a perfect hatred, while they tumultuouſly, and in a violent, riotous manner ruſh into him: Do you therefore give them Entertainment, do you dwell upon them? or do they but occaſionally ſalute you, ſnatch, and run for it? To prevent the Slipperineſs and Darkneſs of Thoughts, let God's Word dwell in you richly, and deſire him, to whom all hearts are open, all deſires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid, to cleanſe the thoughts of your heart by the inſpiration of his holy Spirit; call in the divine Aid unto you, praying him who ſees we have no power of our ſelves to help our ſelves, to defend from all evil Thoughts that may aſſault and hurt the Soul.

And ſince Man's Mind, as ſome may think, is always working, no leſs ſleeping than waking; and ſeeing if it be not fed with good Matter, it works upon what is evil and vain: *With all thy gettings, get Underſtanding* and Knowledge, which will afford and yield Matter in the dark and ſilent night, when taken off from all Company, all worldly Employment and Diſtractions of Senſe, when the Soul is left to it ſelf, and to its own Operations; then to draw out Knowledge, and to commune with our own heart, to have that inſtruct us to ſearch out our Spirit, is the way to good Diſcipline, and to bring our Mind into Frame.

But when Men are barren of holy Thoughts, they are apt to give way to Vanity, to become vain

vain in their Imaginations. If thy ſtudy be in God's Law, and thou be knowing in the Scripture, when thou awakeſt (if bound upon thy Heart) it will cauſe thee to Parley with thy ſelf divinely, before thou receiveſt outward Images of things from abroad, thus, *When I awake* (ſays he) *I am preſent with thee. And a Good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf*, Prov. 14. 14. The fear of the Lord is ſuch a Fountain of Life, and ſo ſtrong confidence. Man's Mind is as a Store-houſe to lay up things in; and we had need have a good Treaſure within; *for out of the abundance of the Heart* Words and Thoughts are fed, and that may be wound up to go to what we would have it almoſt, if we keep pace with it; if not, an upright Heart may have many ſtarting holes; but an inſincere one will be ſure to turn ſoon out of the right way, and couch too in it, as though fearing to be ſought and brought home.

It was the old Condemnation, *The Wickedneſs of Man was great upon Earth*: How? *God ſaw every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was only Evil continually*; *therefore*, he ſaid, *I will deſtroy Man*, whom he had made, and he ſo ſoon again deſtroyed the Work of his own Hands. And ſure it was no light Provocation that kindled ſuch wrath in him, as that nothing but a Deluge could quench it. However we may not be ſufficiently ſenſible of ſuch Provocations; yet becauſe Men *became vain in their Imaginations*, *and their Fooliſh Heart was darkened*, Rom. 1. 21. God gave them up to vile Affections; and he is the ſame God ſtill, (yeſterday, and to day, and for ever,) and hates what he hated in time paſt ſtill as much and for ever; whether he ſo ſignally puniſh it here at all times alike,

alike, or not; none knowing Hatred, any more than Love, by all that is before him. *The Godly Man's delight is in the Law of the Lord, and the Meditation of him is ſweet:* (Indeed to ſtudy any thing with an averſion to it, is not at all pleaſant, if tolerable; the Sabbath it ſelf, though carrying Reſt in the very Name, became a burden to ſuch as cared not for it, *When will the Sabbath be over?*) Now to create ſuch a delight, (as ſpiritual things are diſcerned ſpiritually,) there muſt of neceſſity be ſomething, that is in ſome ſort ſuitable and agreeing to a Man's Nature, which you know was once perfect; and therefore, if not continuing ſo ſtill, the Law of the Lord which, *Pſal.* 19. is perfect, be not ſo much for his Palate; yet it might then be applyed to convert the Soul. And whereas we are Blind and Ignorant, the Teſtimony of the Lord, which maketh Wiſe the Simple, and the Commandment which enlightneth the Eyes, ſhould be more comfortable and welcome to our thoughts, and the Statutes of the Lord more rejoice the Heart. If our righteouſneſs be but as filthy rags, What greater refreſhment to our Souls, than that which is clean? *Ver.* 9. of that Pſalm: And what ſhould we ſeek more diligently with our whole Heart, than *the Judgments of the Lord, which are righteous altogether?* Are we wretched and poor as the *Laodicean* Church? The Law, the Teſtimony, the Statutes, the Commandment, the Fear, and the Judgments of the Lord, are more to be deſired by us than Gold, to enrich us; yea, than much fine Gold, there is their value; their worth is above Rubies; they are ſweeter alſo (being choice intellectual Sweets) than the Honey-comb, there is their pleaſantneſs; and this they have too above

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all other Sweets, that they never cloy, did Nature want no recruit; *All the day long is my ſtudy in them*, ſays Holy *David*; and yet not ſatisfied, unleſs he alſo thought of them when he was waking.

God complains by his Prophet, ſaying, *I have written unto them the things of my Law, and they were counted a ſtrange thing*; as unacquaintedneſs with any thing, may make it ſeem ſtrange: But it is ſaid of *Origen*, that he had the Scriptures by Heart: Indeed every Temper is not alike moulded, is not ſo conſiſtent; ſome may be for Meditation leſs apt, for Recollection unfit, not Bookiſh at all, nor ſo well able to retain, or to bear with retirement, and the duties of it, but take heed the unfitneſs be not Moral more than Natural, more by contrary uſe than Temper; though 'tis true ſome are of a more flight and weak Spirit to retain; yet if thou haſt power to command Words, as ſuppoſe to exhort another, What ſhould hinder but thou mighteſt uſe the ſame Soliloquy or Meditation to thy ſelf? And muſing inarticulately may ſeem to be the moſt Divine Pleaſure; for by ſerious and holy Thoughts, do we not moſt reſemble the Purity and Simplicity of God himſelf? more than by Speech, or outward Actions? In thinking on whom who would not willingly be loſt in a ſweet confuſion of Thoughts, ſuch as Love and Joy and ſuch like ſofter Paſſions of the Mind may produce? A pleaſure diſdaining the ſervile Limits of Expreſſion, not to be told but felt? But to help barrenneſs of Thoughts and Invention, behold an exact Map of the Heavenly *Jeruſalem*, that City above, whoſe Builder and Maker is God; ſee a lively deſcription of that Heavenly Country, drawn by

by a ſelect Pencil, delineated by the Holy Ghoſt; yet reſt not ſatisfied with the Notional part only; but let God's Word be a Light to thy Feet, (to walk by, not thy Head alone, to fill it with Notions, but lift up thy Hands to the Commandment, thy Hands to act alſo;) of which St. *Baſil* gives this account; namely, *That it is a Phyſical Shop of Preſervatives, againſt* (poyſonous) *Hereſies; a Platform of profitable Laws, againſt Rebellious Spirits; a Treaſury of moſt coſtly Jewels, againſt beggarly Elements; a Fountain ſpringing up to Eternal Life.*

Neither is it an Humane Truth only, but a Divine one given by inſpiration; ſuch a Truth as blind Nature could never have groped out, though it carries ſo much of its own Evidence with it; as the Sun is beſt ſeen by its own Light.

This will make wiſer than the Aged, or than Enemies, whoſe Wit is pointed and ſharpen'd with Malice, make Wiſe unto Salvation, directing what to do that we may have Eternal Life, and will appear a perfect Law of Liberty, if we look into it throughly; if we, like the Virgin Mother, ponder it in our Heart; for it is not one ſingle Glance of the Eye, that can give us a perfect view of things ſeen, when as though ſeeing we ſaw not.

This is a ſure Word of Prophecy for us to take heed unto; this brings Life and Immortality to light, and is a perfect Rule of Faith, the very Ground work of all our Hopes, and the Exaltation of Charity, an Antidote againſt Sin, (*It is written*, ſays our Lord to *Satan*,) an Amulet, ſtrength of Cordial againſt Sorrow; *in God's Word will I rejoice, in the Lord's Word will I comfort me*; of which Holy Scriptures, written for our comfort,

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to be deprived, is one of the greateſt afflictions. And now if all this be the leaſt thing in them, where there is ſo much Vertue, and ſo much Praiſe, think on theſe things ; and count that thought too flitting, which lives not till it has attained ſome profit. The Sun, though it enlighten the open Air ; yet warms not ſo much as when it's contracted in a Glaſs. A Man may ſometimes be longer tempering and working of his own Heart, before it be brought to due frame and fitneſs : But is it not ſtrange that two Companions ſo nearly related, and united as in one, (Soul and Body,) ſhould ſo long converſe with each other, and yet be ſuch Strangers to one another, perhaps every day more and more ſhy? Thus they ſay the Baſilisk dies if it ſees it ſelf reflected in a Glaſs : But how can a Man taſte any thing ſo well as what he chews?

God would have for Sacrifice, of that kind which chewed the Cud ; though no wonder, if melting in ſoft delight, ſteeping our Souls in charming pleaſures, letting them run out to the very Bottom and Dregs, as at a Sluce of Voluptuouſneſs, till the worſt only remains as a dead Tilt at laſt, we uſe all ſhifts to avoid, and run from our ſelves, as if we were our greateſt Enemies, as in this indeed we are not our leaſt.

Some may ſay not only that the Soul is always thinking, that it is its very Nature and Eſſence never to be unimploy'd, being thoughtful in the moſt ſound and cloſe ſleep, when ſeemingly relaxed and unbent, no leſs buſie and active then, (though ſo roving and ſlippery as to leave no footſteps or impreſſion, ſo as to recollect, treading ſo light, whoſe operations therefore become like the Writing on the ſurface of the Water, that preſently

ſently cometh together again;) but alſo that the Soul lives not where it exiſts, but where it loves.

Sure I am that the Meditation of our Heart may be ſuch as to be acceptable in the ſight of God; neither was the Soul given only to be as Salt to keep the Body from Putrefaction and Corruption, the Soul ſo vigorous, ſo active and able to imploy it ſelf, ſo capacious, large enough to embrace the whole World in one Conception, to bring back occurrences of time paſt, ſo to live over many Years in a few Minutes. Senſe indeed may ſtir it up, outward Objects may help its operations, while it reads in the Book of Nature, though who need to be leſs alone, than when he is alone? *A Good Man out of the Good Treaſure of his Heart, bringeth forth that which is Good*; nobly entertaining Time, ſharpening the Senſe of the Mind, exalting it, enlarging the Heart to the contemplating things vaſt and profound, enough to provoke and whet the beſt Capacity, without diſcouraging the meaneſt: For who that has but the ſenſe of a Man, can chooſe but be mightily affected with the thoughts of living for ever? With the raviſhing contentment of being tranſported (one day) out of the reach of Time and Chance, above the narrow Sphere of Mortality? Of being exempted from all Infirmity, looſed and ſet free from all the exorbitancy of boyſterous, heady, and ruffling Paſſions, placed above Temptation, in the quiet Region, under which all murmuring Thunder does grumble and burſt? And to think of being ſecured in all this, to ſee no end of Bliſs and Glory, that ſhall laſt as long as God can give, or as he himſelf, God Bleſſed for ever, does enjoy; Is it not next to Rapture and Ecſtaſie? Who may not be pleaſed thus beyond

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the flavour or reliſh of any other entertainment whatever? Neither is Contemplation ſo light a thing, but that it may curb the Levity and Wantonneſs of the Mind, by bringing home to us the ſolemnity and accuracy of that Day, the unſpeakable Concerns and whole Affair of another Life.

Would we but learn of him, whom we call our Lord and Maſter, How eaſie were it to apply to our great purpoſe, to take occaſion to ſpiritualize almoſt every contingency of Life, be it never ſo modifyed or circumſtantiated? Was there any common occurrence or buſineſs, but he by an holy kind of Chymiſtry could gather ſomething from it that was more ſublime, of an higher Nature and Extract? Thus from *Jacob*'s Well, he paſſeth to the Water of Life; from Eating, labour not for the Meat that periſheth; from being asked to mediate in matters of Eſtate, take heed and beware of Covetouſneſs; if we come to Building, Plowing, and Sowing, or thoſe mean Offices of Women's ſweeping the Houſe, leavening Bread, or grinding at the Mill, Could he not readily adapt and make them all applicable to his great deſign? Neither is there any ſuch high flight required to improve many little accidents of Humane Life, to the contemplating what orders and governs them, any thing almoſt ſerving an intent Mind to ſuch an holy purpoſe; a Mind reſolved not to be tainted with, or indeed ſmell offenſively of thoſe earthly things it is here below ſo converſant about, when it comes to be ſeated in Peace, to enter upon that Joy that ſhall [illegible]ortly be revealed, enough, if poſſible, to oppreſs with wonder.

Nor is this a meer Fiction, a well-contrived Fable, nor Romantick, but rather the Words of Truth and Soberneſs; though there may be an abuſe of the moſt Sacred Things: But why ſhould that hinder improved Parts, ſmother and ſtifle them in ſuch Notional Vertues, if ſome boldly run into *Enthuſiaſm*, others leſs confident into Horrour and Dread? If ſome vainly promiſe Life and Glory to themſelves, rather than truſt to the Covenant-promiſe of God for them; and others, who ſhould rather ſuſpect their own Suſpicions, are by diving into themſelves cramp'd with panick Fears and needleſs Jealouſies? Though none are ſtaked down to this or that thought, but have ſcope to expatiate, choice variety to pleaſe and delight; ſuch as the opening of Heaven in a Glorious Scene of Light, to receive, *&c.*

You need not dwell upon Hell's enlarging of it ſelf to devour; there is a Pile of Wonders to be admired; what Buildings are here in the Frame of Nature! There are wonderful adminiſtrations of Providence, ſo far above the fluttering pitch of what we call Wit, as to turn Reaſon giddy almoſt at the ſight, as unable to comprehend them: How hardly do we gueſs at things aright, earthly things! Who then is ſufficient to tell of heavenly? Are they not much better blazon'd and aggrandiz'd by our ſilent and ſpeechleſs admiration, (the diſcourſe of our Mind, in ſuch towering flights,) admiration of things that the Angels deſire to pry into? Thus while we are in the Body, we may be ſo preſent with Chriſt as by a Converſation in Heaven; where the mighty Twelve ſit upon Thrones, and for ever have their abode in that dazzling luſtre, which Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit; dwell in that re-

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fined Light where the King of Glory has his reſidence; and, as a King the Court, makes Heaven by his preſence; who makes Angels and Archangels his Menial Servants, and part of his Retinue; who makes the Stars of Light, the glorioufly ſtudded Canopy of Heaven, the ſweeping of his Glorious Train: Are not Hours taken up in the thoughts of ſuch things, the ſhorteſt of all Hours? Is not Time ſo gently worn out, the moſt profitable and Heavenly Work? And to be judged more eaſie than to be carking what we ſhall eat, what we ſhall drink, how we ſhall contrive to paſs this day, ſo as to make it tolerably pleaſant to our ſelves? Goodly Thoughts and fore-caſt! We can ſet our ſelves to meditate how to retaliate a Wrong; we can ſeriouſly think of revenge, with preſent ſweetneſs; nay, and are there not that can ſtudy to do an ill turn, unmerited? Men can ſhut their Eyes to deviſe miſchief for others, or open them *to ſearch out Iniquity diligently*, Pſal. 64. 6. Can caſt about how to do an Earthly Good to themſelves; if to build, they can firſt ſit down and contrive, as well as count the coſt: And will not ſome ſeek diligently for an opportunity to hurt their own Souls, watch for the twilight, as though deſiring to go down to the Chambers of Death, unſeen? But ſhall they do more to deſtroy themſelves, than we to ſave our ſelves? Some better Minds can bend their Thoughts to the ſearch of Natural Things, enquire after the Magnitude of Stars, their diſtance, the Motion of the Heavens: But yet theſe ſo ſtrong, ſo vigorous, ſo clear, are ſtill but dark Souls, if they paſs bye in the mean while the God that made them; this is for an high-born Soul, to go learnedly to Hell, by Book; or like

one gazing on the Stars, till he fall into the Ditch. *When I conſider the Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers, the Moon and the Stars which thou haſt ordained,* (no mention of the Sun, it ſeeming to be a Night Meditation,) *Lord, what is Man that thou art mindful of him?* ſays the *Pſalmiſt*; (I might add, eſpecially if ſo forgetful as not to be made to remember the great Creator in the leaſt Creature, ſpeaking ſo loudly and plainly to remind him of what he has loſt, his right to Memory, that does not think of it,) *thou madſt him a little lower than the Angels, to Crown him with Glory and Worſhip*: This from his beholding and conſidering the Heavens, the very nethermoſt. He ſtill deſcends, *Thou haſt put all things in ſubjection under his Feet, all Sheep and Oxen, the Beaſts of the Field, the Fowls of the Air, the Fiſhes of the Sea, whatſoever walketh through the paths of the Sea*; upon which, *O Lord, our Governour, how excellent is thy Name in all the World!* Theſe Things which have not underſtanding of their own to do it, may thus as it were give praiſe by Man that has, or juſtly occaſion its being given: And thus may the out-goings of the Morning and Evening be made the occaſions of praiſe unto God. And the worſt piece of Rubbiſh in the World's Furniture, if we may ſo call the meaneſt Creatures therein, may be our School-maſter (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) to bring us unto Chriſt. Meditation is ſo like *Jacob*'s Ladder, by which we do ſcale the Heavens, or bring them down to us: *Ask now the Beaſts and they ſhall teach thee, and the Fowls of the Air ſhall declare unto thee*; or, *ſpeak to the Earth and it ſhall teach thee, and the Fiſhes of the Sea ſhall declare unto thee, Who knoweth not in all theſe, that the Hand of the Lord hath wrought this? The Heavens declare*

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the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his handy Work. The inviſible things of God are clearly ſeen by the things that are made, by the Day, yea, by the Night, by every ſpire of Graſs, or the leaſt Inſect, wherein is Life and Motion, and the leſs the matter, the greater we count the Art; as to have a Watch in the Stone of a Ring, would be more admirable than in greater bulk.

Since therefore there is ſo much Practical Divinity in the Boſom of Nature, and ſince inanimate things may ſpeak aloud in our thoughts, our Hearts ſhould be like an Alembick to diſtil what is uſeful out of any thing it meets with; for there is an occaſional (as well as ſet and more laſtingly ſolemn) Meditation, where things but ſalute us in the view or tranſitory paſſing by.

And if we ſee all Perfections, all Things in God, let us alſo ſee him in all things, who is excluded nothing that is good, and let us by reflex'd Acts of Meditation, parley with our ſelves, commune with our own Heart, ſearch out our Spirit, try what manner of one we are of; let us ſuffer the Mind to return upon, and dive into it ſelf; conſider what we are, what we have been, what we are like to be hereafter; yet ſo as knowing this, that although Holy Thoughts are the repaſt, a Noble Entertainment, the Food and Feaſting of the Mind, the Mind may be ſo filled as to ſurfeit with too much, as well as the Body with exceſſive eating what is delightful to the taſte, the Spirit may be clogg'd and over-charged, ſuch is Humane Frailty: Wherefore take heed of intemperance, even in theſe things; for what Man under Heaven is capable of a continual Motion, or Thoughtfulneſs,

neſs, without wearineſs and complaint? 'Tis enough for the glorifyed Saints and Angels, in a ſet manner, to be ever ſteddily thinking on the Divine Attributes, and admiring the fair Beauty of his Temple, while they ſtedfaſtly behold the bright Face of God, ſeeing him as he is.

But ſuch is Mortal Nature: The Sun, that is ſo pleaſant to the Eye, while it rejoyces to behold its light, will not long be gazed upon without pain and grief.

Now, if our Nature be ſuch as to faint and grow languid, even in the beſt of Holy Meditation, though never ſo ſweet: How racking muſt the pain of that Mind be, which is tortured in it ſelf with any thoughts of Evil; ſuch as Envy, like Fire in a Man's Bones, to conſume him; Anger, that ſhorter Madneſs; Malice, Anger boyled up to a conſiſtency; or like Liquors kept too long till they grow ſowre; Revenge, that Malice concocted; diſtruſt, that works by too much doubtful care and thoughtfulneſs, anxious traverſes and debates of the Mind? And therefore, *Matth.6.25. take no Thought*; give your ſelf eaſe, let not outward things feed upon your Mind, who with great endeavour do nothing: *For which of you, by taking Thought, can add one Cubit to his Stature*? God, who ſees not as Man ſees, underſtands theſe and the like Thoughts, afar off.

We judge beſt of the Nature of the Water at the Fountain Head, by the firſt Ebullition, or bubbling up, better than by the current at a diſtance; ſince the Chanel, through which it paſſes, may tincture the Stream.

If out of your Heart proceed Evil Thoughts, take heed they be not lodged there, with privi-

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lege to be impreſſed upon your Mind; and reprinted in new, though uncorrect, Editions, with enlargement, and to ſpawn and bring forth accurſed numerous Offspring; for clear Water in a Glaſs will remain ſo ſtill, though ſhaken together, if there be no filth at the bottom, none can riſe, though it be diſturbed.

And to have a naughty Heart, a corrupt Mind, a reprobate Senſe: Is it not worſe than to do that which is naught ſometimes? A Good Man may be ſtung of a Serpent; but that is not ſo odious as to have a Viperous Nature of his own. Do we ſpeak it in Pity, or does it at all move our Compaſſion towards it, to ſay of a Toad it is its Nature to be poyſonous? Is this an Argument to ſave alive, or rather to kill and deſtroy an Adder, let it alone, for it is its Nature to bite or ſting? Not but that a ſpice of Melancholy may cauſe a ſwarming of Thoughts, choaking and ſtifling through their number, and even confounding by their diſorder; and a weaker Spirit, a more feeble Mind, may be the fitter for *Satan* to work upon by Diabolical Injections, or to buffet with ſuch Meſſengers ſent of him, whether there be any ſuch rancour or gall, and root of bitterneſs within, to ſpring and grow up from, or not. And the weak, though ſound Chriſtian, muſt in this caſe bear with himſelf, as he would do in other bodily Diſtempers: If ones Memory fails him, does any think that a Sin or Fault at all in him? If our Thoughts, our fruitful Mind, bud and bloſſom like a Tree in whole cluſters, (though the leſs Hope of all being brought to ripe Fruit in its Perfection,) Does not Holy *David* ſpeak of the multitude of Thoughts that he had within him? In which, the Comforts of God

yet refreſhed his Soul. Indeed, while we think of many things together as it were, do we think of any thing to purpoſe? Like a Man going many ways, who in effect ſtands ſtill. In a tumultuous Variety and Throng, each one becometh a Bar to the other, and ſo all of them together are an hindrance; like dying Men leaping into a Boat, helping to drown one another.

Many Holy Men may have been in an Agony of Mind, as it were divided in themſelves; drawn this way, then called another; almoſt perſwaded to think this thing, then induced to believe that; carried and hurried away in the multitude, ſometimes born up of them, anon beat down, miſerably hatter'd and wearied in the preſs; and if theſe things do not run conſtantly and uninterruptedly as a Stream through their whole Life; yet then ſtreaking along in it.

And the Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Man, that they are Vanity; in the loud crys of which, the Soul is ready to be put to ſilence, did not God's Mercy (ſpeaking louder) uphold it, enlightning the dark and uncomfortable diſconſolate Mind, (preying upon the Body,) ſo ignorant in the ſight of God; purifying the Affections by the Inſpiration of his Holy Spirit, confirming and ſtrengthening the Will, when the Feet are almoſt gone; and the Heart through its own Infirmity, ſays I am caſt out of the ſight of God's Eyes, ſo ſlippery and inconſtant, though in the general the Man be a Man after God's own Heart; ſo roving and ſtraggling the Mind, the looſer part of it, running round in Men, as though centred no where; or if fixed on God, yet fetching ſuch circumferences about, as a Wheel may, that yet is ſo far fix'd, as

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that it cannot ſtart ſo, but that the moſt remote turn is within ſuch bounds, as it cannot paſs, be the rotation never ſo rapid, violent, and quick as a Whirlwind. The greateſt excurſions of a Good Man's Heart and Thoughts are within call, ſoon to be fetch'd home again; though the next remove may be wavering one way, and the ſucceeding one quite another: A Needle that is touch'd with a Load-ſtone, which is naturally apt to make it point to the North, may upon any diſordering of its quiet reſting that way, firſt turn to the Right Hand, then vibrate again as far to the Left; as though one while you ſhould think it had loſt, or forgot its Nature, it ſhall look towards the Eaſt, and fling again, as by a rebound, quite due Weſt; (though how wide the one from the other!) I ſay, though a Needle ſo touch'd, may upon ſome diſorder happening to it, ſo run riot, move ſo extravagantly, lightly, and wantonly; yet even amidſt ſuch preternatural Motions, it ſtands as well affected to the North as ever it did, remains as true and conſtant to it, were it but again ſettled, as before, when it reſted quietly and wholly in it, 'tis not through any fickleneſs in its Nature that it is carried to another Point of the Heavens; 'tis contrary to its own Propenſity or Natural Inclination, as you may ſee by its getting into due place and order again, as faſt as may be, never reſting any where till it can obtain it.

Thus Thoughts that uſed orderly to be wound up to go tuneably to this or that, may be ſo broken and ſhatter'd, ſo ruffled, as to become like a diſorder'd Clock, that yet (if I may ſo ſay) knows how to go true and regularly again upon a little ſetting right.

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The Wiſeſt Men, when hurried and amazed, do ſuch things as they can afterward correct themſelves in the doing of: A Man in a fright, may leap into the Sea to eſcape drowning, when he ſees the Ship in great danger of ſinking. Men therefore ſhould always have faſt hold on themſelves, and not be afraid of ſudden fear, ſo as to caſt off all truſt in God, at a time when they ſtand moſt in need of ſuch confidence for their ſupport; without which they are ſo little, as though ready to faint in their diſtreſs, in their day of adverſity.

Wherefore keep the Mind ſomewhat chained, not ſuffering it to run looſe; if you would bring Thoughts into ſubjection, reſtrain it even in ſuch as with a kind of diſorderly pleaſure bring a ſort of falſe Joy, or vain and empty Delight at the preſent, but a Sting after them in the Tail, or latter end, that will not eaſily be pluck'd out again, when Melancholy has got the upper hand, and rides triumphantly over Reaſon ſubdued and brought into Bondage.

Thoughts will alſo ingender and beget one another, (ſo may you have ſeen a Circle on the Face of the Waters, ſpread, encreaſe, and multiply, like one Wave breaking on the Neck of another,) and come up like the Fiſhes of the Sea ſometimes in whole Shoals, put forth as the Earth the tender Graſs and green Herb, ſtruggling and ſtriving for priority; though the Mind be ſick in breeding of them, in their conception very uneaſie; though ſuch a pain and trouble to it for them to be brought forth; though ſo impregnated it goes heavily all the day long, and ſorely Travels in the Birth, roaring for the very diſquietneſs of the Heart within.

Thoughts

Thoughts riſe promiſcuouſly in great Numbers, like ſparks out of a burning, which finding no fewel to maintain and keep them alive, by fomenting and cheriſhing, but fly up and are preſently gone out, vaniſh; thus a thought periſheth in the thinking.

Sometimes Thoughts are a-flote, or ſuggeſted and darted into the Soul by the Malice of *Satan*, cauſing the Spirits to droop, and the Mind to go ſtooping, many things incoherently crowding, thronging, and preſſing in impertinently, violently ruſhing like a mighty Wind, without any great notice or attention of the Heart, Things no more conſiſtent than looſe Sand on an heap, and as ſoon blown away; though ſome may be apt to be frighted with ſuch, eſpecially if the tranſient glances touch or run upon any things ſinful to be done; yet without a ſerious attention to them, without a delightful, laſting, or wilful muſing, ſo as to make the Fire burn, the Heart hot within; it is like a flaſh of Lightening, a darting of *Satan* into the Soul, come and gone as at once.

When we behold a long proſpect of things for many Miles together, it is but ſuperficial ſeeing, leaving few or no perfect thoughts of any particular thing behind, not unlike unto which is an huddle and mix'd medley of thoughts: Can a fiery Dart, if it does not kindle, hurt us? Can every ſnatch at the Soul rob us of it? Every rough touch and hard handling, ſully and defile it with bloches, or ſo much as the ſpot of Sons? The rankeſt Poyſon does no harm, if wiped away and not ſuffered to lie corroding; but when they are invited to take up their reſidence, when entertained and made welcome, when pleaſingly dwelt upon till they become

come operative; then the fooliſh Heart being darken'd with ſuch black Fumes, it chaſes away the Spirit of God, who dwelleth in Light, and in whom is no Darkneſs at all; the Invitation to whom for to come and abide with any, is to have the Heart ſwept and garniſh'd; and where that comes, Satan may have but ſmall joy to be ſeen under the ſame Roof.

Nay farthermore, ſudden and rude tumultuous Thoughts, may not only be none of ours; but if we keep the Will and Affections under a prudent Confinement from them, they are ſet on our ſcore, ſo many evil Suggeſtions, ſo many fiery Darts of Satan quench'd; they are ſet upon our Head as ſo many Garlands and Crowns of Glory, for ſo many Conqueſts and Triumphs; reckon'd to us, ſo many Temptations of the evil one, overcome, reſiſted, repelled, and beaten back, weakening his Power of Darkneſs; ſo many Overtures made by him, rejected; ſo many Stratagems, rendered ineffectual; ſo many of his pretended kind offers refuſed; ſo many Aſſaults of his, without Battery; ſo many Temptations, baffled, with ſhame enough on his part; or if not ſo perfectly vanquiſh'd, as to riſe up no more; yet then *write, ſaith the Spirit*, (for theſe things are all noted in his Book) ſo many Terrors patiently ſuffered, though with a troubled Mind, from Youth upward; and *bleſſed is the Man that endureth Temptation*; even thus bleſſed in the very deed, as a rejoycing or glorying in tribulation amounts to; as there is a long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs; and ſo profound is the Peace of God, as to paſs Man's underſtanding; great and ineffable was the Peace that our Lord left with his drooping Diſciples, who (as the World

World could not take it away) gave not as the World giveth, in formality of Salutation with it, accompanied perhaps with a fruitleſs deſire, or wiſh of the ſame; but he left it as a real Legacy; *My Peace I give unto you,* ſays he who was the Prince of it; *let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid, lo I am with you to the end of the world*; which Words may ſeem to referr, or be applicable, to all true Believers, thoſe Diſciples being long ſince fallen aſleep; and if ſo, if the Promiſe (which is more than a Purpoſe only, as a thing declared to cheriſh Hope) be to us and to our Children: there is an All-ſufficiency in God, Allowances ſuiting with all Caſes, that his Teſtimonies may rejoyce the Heart, and that they who love his Law, who are truly ſincere, might have nothing inordinately to offend them, that their Hearts ſhould be overmuch troubled at, God's Mercies being ſure Mercies, and ſeaſonable as Rain in Drought; neither will he perhaps ſuffer us to want any one deſired, and asked rightly, without a better in lieu thereof; or if we get Heaven in the iſſue, what do we loſe? Which if we obtain at the laſt, no ſuch matter if our paſſage to it be dark, indeed how can we enter into Life, but through the Portal of Death? And if we live in Deaths oft, ſo do all Men even in the midſt of Life: Wherefore if in heavineſs at any time, think upon God, and gird up the Loins of your Minds, leſt you be weary, and faint in them: In heavineſs! For what? Not as troubled about the difficulty of the Duty in it ſelf, but at the unſuitableneſs of our own corrupted Hearts, from whence the difficulty ariſes, and not from what is perfect and abſolute Freedom; while we groan earneſtly in Spirit under our own Burden,

den, and Lump of Fleſh, not any Burden of the Lord, who dealeth with us as with Rational Creatures; if the Aſs carry its Burden, and the Ox draw, we do not much matter their willingneſs or unwillingneſs, if they do not betray it to us ſome way or other, as in ſluggiſhneſs or untowardneſs; but God obliges us to ſerve and obey him, not as of neceſſity, grudgingly; but willingly, as conſtrained only of Love and Gratitude or jointly ſo, even while we look at the recompenſe of Reward, ſet before us, that we might run with patience to it; we are obliged to believe his Law to be perfect, the Commandment to be holy, and juſt, and good; and theſe Thoughts of our hearts ſhould influence our actions.

God expects that we ſhould be renewed in our minds, ſo as to have ſome ſuitableneſs to our Work, or at leaſt follow hard after this; though he may alſo accept of Men's Wills, many times, looking rather at what they fain would do, and earneſtly endeavour after, than the things done in an imperfect manner, the things but ſo attained to; which yet may cauſe many to ſuſpect themſelves for; who, if they were aſſured of God's gracious acceptance, fully Perſwaded he ſmiled on their imperfect Work, would ſay it is enough; his Love makes happy, the alone fear of whoſe diſpleaſure before-made ſo miſerable, as to be doubtfully divided in a mixture of thoughts, bewildering the Soul, as in a Miſt, and they that walk in gloomineſs, in the night, muſt not expect the more bright, and clear, and comfortable Light of the Sun, but be contented with ſuch ſmaller, faint and glimmering Lights the Night affords; as ſometimes a very Cloud has a ſort of Lightſomneſs or brightneſs in it.

Should

Should God vouchſafe a Meſſenger from Heaven to many, even diſtracted with Thoughts minted in their own Heart, or flung in by the Enemy of Souls, that as Tares they might grow up to choak the good Corn; it might very likely be with thoſe Words of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Chap. 29. v. 11. *I know the Thoughts that I think towards you, ſaith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.* And even very dark and diſmal Clouds themſelves do refreſh the weary Earth when they diſſolve, dropping: And if we ſow in tears, what is ſo watered, may yield the greater Encreaſe.

Thoughts, when ſo wire-drawn as effectually to cauſe Sin, are to be feared, when Luſt ſo conceiveth, as to bring that forth; but if the Birth of our Thoughts be abortive, or ſtifled before they can come to it, this is a Rape committed upon the Mind; though, if we take not heed to watch narrowly our own Hearts, there may be ſome Sins a man's very corrupted Nature is prone unto, did Satan ſtand by and ſay nothing, one part of man being revolted from, and warring againſt the other; the Fleſh luſting againſt the Spirit.

There are alſo mix'd Temptations, partly of our ſelves, partly the inſtigation of the evil one, as ſome may be almoſt ſaid to be wholly of him; not but that on the other hand, ſome may tempt the Devil, lighting a Candle to him (as we ſay) when overgrown Monſters even among Sinners, horrid Blaſphemers, that ſtink in the Noſtrils of men of corrupt Minds, coming up ſo rank, waxed to ſuch a full ſtature, grown up to ſuch an height, and (as I may abuſively ſay) perfection in wickedneſs, as to Sin of Maliciouſneſs, which is

to

to be for a Lamentation, when the whole Heart and Thoughts are ſo engroſſed, together with the Will and Affections, the Fancy utterly polluted, acting as on a Stage, the Pleaſures of Sin, rolling and wallowing therein; not but that in good men ſuch Thoughts may ariſe, as that, if ſuffered to kindle and blaze out, would be as ſtrange Fire to offer before God, and ſuch Sulphur ſometimes is apt to mix with our Incenſe; which, diſallow'd, daſh'd, and abhorr'd, may rather ſerve for matter of Humiliation, than other Trouble; Vanity ſticking ſo faſt and cloſe to the Heart of a Man, like Ivy in a Wall, very hardly, if at all, to be utterly deſtroyed, till the Wall be digg'd down; and after we are renewed by the Spirit, the Fleſh is weak enough ſtill, and the Malice of Satan my be much ſtronger for this; and we know how that very good, nay, the beſt of Ground, naturally chuſes rather to bring forth Weeds, than Flowers, or Good Grain, of it ſelf; and the better the Soil, the ranker the Weed too.

Our Hearts put forth evil Thoughts naturally, till cultivated and dreſs'd; nay, and in a Garden carefully ordered, to prevent it, Weeds will ſpring; but then we do not ſo much blame the Ground, as thoſe who let them grow to an head, not plucking and rooting of them out of their dwelling.

We are to take care that we are not brought into captivity and bondage of perverſe Reaſonings in our Mind, and to try to bring every Thought into ſubjection to the Will of Chriſt, to purifie our Heart, to ſerve God in Spirit; and if our thoughts do ſometime ſtraggle and rove, occaſional Salutes are no certain ſigns of Love and Good-will; but if Satan thus deſire to ſift you, it may be a ſign

you are good Wheat, ſome of the beſt of Grain; and if Thoughts, like an evil *Genius*, haunt you, let them put you upon Caution and Watchfulneſs, winding up the Plummet, lifting up the Heart, rather than unprofitable hanging down the head like a Bull-ruſh, vain Muſing, or Thoughts of Fooliſhneſs, upon frequent and ardent recourſe to God in Prayer, as with an *One thing have I deſired of thee, deny me not before I die*; when ſo oppreſſed, do thou, Lord, undertake for me; and fear not ſuch [Conceits,] rather than [Debates,] leſt they cauſe ſuch a timorouſneſs in thy Nature at laſt, as to make thee by inſenſible degrees to grow ſhy of God and his holy Ordinances, ſo degenerating into the Nature of the wicked one, part of whoſe Torment it is to think of him, which he does with fear and trembling; think thou comfortably on the Promiſes, the enlivening Book of Peace, that ſhall judge you according to the Rules of Mercy; and if you look upon Man's Miſery, look alſo into the Redemption from it; as they ſay, there is no poiſon grows any where in Nature, but there is an Antidote grows near it to expel it; think of the All-heal of Grace; believe that this is verified in that to be ſure, in all that duly ſeek to be cured of their ſpiritual Diſeaſes; and thus repleniſh the Mind when gall'd and fretted, by pouring this Oyl of Gladneſs into your wounds of Conſcience; and let not the Mind muſe upon Vanity and Vexation of Spirit; let it not run looſe; but be thus prevented and prepoſſeſs'd with better ſeaſoning, improving and heightening your Aſſent, that it may have an anſwerable force and efficacy upon the Soul; Meditation's work being to enforce and apply, or to digeſt, when ſtudy, ei-

ther our own, or another's, has ſearched out the Truth, to better the Heart, not only fill the Head with Notions, but while we think on God, we ſhould do it ſo as to love and adore, as well as admire him.

When we think of Sin, it ought to be with abhorrence, ſo as to ſhun and avoid it the more carefully; when of Heaven, it ſhould be a Spur to our Thoughts, more earneſtly to purſue it, ſerving to quicken us in the heavenly Life; as well-wrought Thoughts do ſettle, help to faſhion and form our Wills to be conformable to the Will of Chriſt, not reſting only in bare Aſſent to the Truth, but ending in firm and ſteady reſolution: Wherefore play the Artiſt in thinking, drawing the Notion into the Will and Affections, and then the Heart will be ſet open to receive what is good, and not be ſatisfied without moderate repletions, it will ſo hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs.

Wicked Men may ſometimes have good thoughts; but not cheriſhing them, they bear no fruit of Grace, as though they had received it in vain, to no effect, bringing no fruit to perfection, and they are imputed to them no farther than that they were ſo near to Heaven, or may be aggravating their Sin in reſiſting and quenching ſo good a Spirit, moving in them, to have done them good. And then on the contrary, why ſhould any think that evil Suggeſtions of the Devil, and black, foul Spirits of the Night, if not allowed and fomented, ſhould be any more effectual to the deſtroying their Souls, than tranſitory good Thoughts in wicked Men, neglecting or deſpiſing them, are to the ſaving theirs?

Need of Patience.

THough many bearing forth good Seed, who ſow in Tears, have need of Patience, as the Husbandman has, who knows yet very well what Seed he has ſown, and what it muſt come up; though we ſow to the Spirit, (if Light be ſown) it muſt have time to ſpring up, ere we can expect to reap Life everlaſting; though we ſhall in due time reap, if we faint not; which ſhould ſweeten the Commandment in any harſhneſs to corrupted Fleſh and Blood, with abundance of ſpiritual Joy, even under Pain and Uneaſineſs, which proceeds not from the Nature of the Command, but our Unfitneſs; to help conquer which, we have the great privilege of Prayer, and the intereſt thereof, the unburdening our ſelves when heavy laden, upon him who has born our grief, and carried our ſorrow: *Wherefore in your patience poſſeſs ye your Souls*; for what poſſeſſion can yield ſuch a pleaſurable reliſh in the enjoyment, can afford any ſo high a degree of ſatisfaction, if it be not held and poſſeſs'd in quiet?

Now the Soul of a Man is a great Treaſure, a wonderful Inheritance, a mighty Poſſeſſion indeed; ſuch, as that what is any profited by the gaining the whole World, with the loſs of this? A Man will give all that he hath for his Life; and yet if

the Soul be diſquieted within, what do all things from without advantage him? Is it not better for it to ceaſe to be, than to be tortured? For the Soul to yield up it ſelf to go a Progreſs into the Land of Darkneſs, if any ſuch to be found, as where all things are forgotten, than to be evermore upon the Rack, always fretting at ungodlineſs? As all Sin is apt to infect or vex.

Wherefore ye have need of that, without which, Men are ſo ſoon moved to do Evil, ſo eaſily provoked to leave off to do Good, before they come to inherit the Promiſe.

Now Patience is a curbing of the Mind's exorbitancy, and upon this account may ſeem to be a denial exerciſed towards a Man's ſelf, check'd as by an Holy Violence offered; yet is the Soul's Freedom and ſetting at large from the troubleſomeneſs of what would bear ſway, and rule turbulently in it, bringing it into Bondage; for you are the Servant of what you obey, whether it be Anger, or Impatience, *&c.* The tranquillity or Equanimity of the Mind or Soul calmly poſſeſſed, is under the Goſpel of Peace to exceed that Philoſophical ſuſtaining of a Man's ſelf; foraſmuch as ancient Heathen Philoſophy might teach Men ſtrongly to oppoſe themſelves to adverſe Fortune, and quit themſelves like Men, as looking to the inevitableneſs of the thing come upon them, without ſo much may be as glancing at the juſtneſs of the diſpoſing Providence, the equity of the Judge of all the Earth, in every of his proceedings with any Perſon conſidered as a Sinner, and ſo as his Debtor, owing this and whatever comes from him in a vindictive Judicial manner; neither might that bare Philoſophy ſo much conſider, and have reſpect unto the

the tendency of a Patient enduring Afflictions, to advance Men's Eternal Good, that might not have an Eye to this, or ſo dark as to ſee but a glimmering light, ſo weak is the Natural ſight of a Man, to diſcern Spiritual things: Shall not we then (who yet ſcarce dare enter the Liſts with them of the better and more refined Heathens) think it intolerable impudence, by impatience and repinings at any thing, to ſet our ſelves againſt God's Juſtice in the diſpenſation; yea, his Mercy deſigning upon us in all his Fatherly Corrections? Is it not Ingratitude, as well as Fooliſhneſs and Sin, to ſpoil the gracious intent towards us, by murmurings and anſwering again? By Patience, nevertheleſs, I mean not a ſtupifying the Senſes and Spirit of a Man, I do not underſtand that to be faithful enduring, that is endured without all ſenſe of grief: But when it is ſuch as to be upheld and propt by the Divine Conſolation, or Chriſtian force, oppoſing the Natural ſenſe of uneaſineſs, pain, or grief; ſo that a Stoical Apathy, or utter rejection of Senſe, as though by caſting off Humane Nature to put on an Iron diſpoſition altogether inſenſible, may alſo be a Vice, if not rather an impoſſible thing for any Man to do, notwithſtanding the vain-glorious pretendings to it: *Numb.* 12. 14. *If her Father had ſpit in her Face, ſhould ſhe not be aſhamed ſeven days?* 'Tis true, ſome, not of ſo ſoft an Heart, may with a little ſtrife and regret ſtop Tears from flowing in the Natural Channel and Current thereof, or make their Countenance and Looks give the lie to their Heart; (Joy and Sorrow being both to be cover'd over deceiveably;) but can Men receive and imbrace a perfect ſtupidity purely void of Senſe, any other-

wiſe than in Notion and bare Apprehenſion only, if ſo? Is not this a *Chimera*, a Fiction, or but a Stock and Image of Patience, rather than that lively? We are not forbid all Sorrow; nay, *Bleſſed are they that duly mourn. Ye ſhall weep and lament*, ſays our Lord to his Diſciples, and he himſelf wept more than once, and very ſorrowful was his Soul, if not even unto Death, ſo mightily ſenſible of his pain and ſufferings, as that who knows not how he made Prayers, if not alſo ſtrong Cryings unto God, that if it was poſſible that bitter Cup might paſs from him, ſo ſtrong was his Agony? A Man may then be very patient under any Sufferings, and yet make mention of them. Our Lord told of his Soul's being ſo exceeding ſorrowful: *I was dumb and opened not my Mouth, becauſe it was thy doing*, is not to be underſtood as if every Word making a Declaration of our Sorrow, was an Act of Impatience under it, and a froward reſiſting the mighty Hand of God upon us, inſtead of humbling our ſelves under it.

'Tis well if Men in extremity forbear to ſhew themſelves Patterns of unquietneſs, and turbulency of Spirit, and become humble and ſubmiſſive; 'tis good that they refrain their Tongue from Evil, and that in all this they ſin not with their Mouth, do not charge God fooliſhly, nor ſpeak unadviſedly with their Lips, breaking ſilence through the Watch ſet to keep the Door thereof; for the Tongue is an unruly Member, diſcovering much Frailty and Infirmity, Paſſion and Diſcontent, Complaint and Curſe proceeding from a ſowre Spirit, violently throwing Men out of their poſſeſſion of themſelves, notwithſtanding their ſo good a Title to it: *Wherefore if any offend not in Word*,

Word, the ſame is a perfect Man. They ſay the Lyon laſhes himſelf into rage with his own ſtern ſtirring up Anger in himſelf: So may Men ſpit upon the Coal, or blow it till it glows. And as they ſay Anger is but a ſhort Madneſs, Was not that Emperour impatient almoſt to the verifying this, when he cauſed the Sea to be ſhackled, and beaten with many ſtripes, as though to bring it into better ſubjection, than any more in its raging to throw down his Bridge? As if the Waves were not as Proud, as Impatient, and Impetuous, as he could be.

We know that God is the God of Patience, and exerciſes more every day, than we are in a capacity of doing in our whole Lives: Wherefore think it a God-like, Noble way of overcoming all things. The *Arabians* had a Proverb, he that overcometh Evil with Evil, does not overcome, but is himſelf conquered.

Patience is a Crown ſet with Wrongs and Injuries, Calumnies, and Reproaches, as with the richeſt Diamonds, the moſt precious Stones; the ſame is the Key of Joy, but making haſte, a Key opening a Door to Repentance of the ſame at leiſure.

Is not Patience therefore fitly called by that Ancient, the Soul's Armour? As though it was as dangerous going to Fight without that, as to engage in a Spiritual Conflict without being girt about with the other.

My Son if thou come to ſerve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation; firſt ſet thine Heart right, then conſtantly endure. Gold is tryed in the Fire, and acceptable Men in the Furnace of Adverſity: Whatſoever is brought upon thee bear

cheerfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low eſtate. For is there any one Command that can be fulfilled aright, in the want of Patience? Which is the maker up of Men's Loſſes, the Reſtorer of Peace, the Healer of Grief, relieving as well as becoming ſeveral Degrees and Ages, if not alſo adorning the very Humours of Men, and like Aromatick Perfumes, ſmells moſt ſweet in the Fire; when a virulent Spirit is like a Stone caſt therein, ſpitting in the face of him that caſt it, inſtead of being melted down.

The redoubling Pains, and violent Humors in an inflamed Body, and fired Blood, cannot ſometimes warm and fire the Spirit of a Man; conſider thoſe of old, in the force of Fire's waſtful power, in extremity of Poverty like an armed Man ſetting upon them, and beſieging them on every ſide; Perplexities of Baniſhment, torments racking Men to invent them; conſider one for all, him that endured ſuch contradiction of Sinners againſt himſelf, (and are there not ſtill in a ſort after-Sufferings in Heaven, *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?*) that we faint not in our Minds, but may *run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us, looking unto Jeſus, the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, who, for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is now ſet down at the right hand of God.*

And as towards others, ſo alſo are we to perform the Duty of patient enduring and bearing with our ſelves, when we cannot, through bodily Infirmity, do the things that we would.

And is not the very beholding the Indecency of an impatient Soul, a means of Cure or Prevention, through the odiouſneſs of the Sight?

Neither

Neither is Heaven the Reward of ſuch only as do well; but of thoſe that do well and ſuffer for it, it redoubles Light and Glory; *wherefore let Patience have her perfect Work*, that ye may be entire, lacking nothing.

If, as ſome have thought, there are two Evils of Life annexed to every Good; what can make humane Life tolerably eaſie, ſo as with comfort to be born with ſuch an heavy preſſure, but a lightning of the Burden by bearing it to the beſt advantage? Not like an Heifer unaccuſtomed to the Yoke, chafing, and fretting, and galling it ſelf, which then is forced to ſubmit to it, when ſo much Strength is in vain ſpent, and unprofitably waſted, that ſhould have helped to ſuſtain and bear it; but as thoſe rather that are skilful in bearing Burdens, that may know how ſo to humour a great Bulk in the weightineſs thereof, as to be leſs cumber'd by it, and all becauſe ſo wiſely managed, as though to the ſitting lighter than in it ſelf conſider'd; we ſhould, like ſuch begirding their Bodies, gird up the Loins of our Mind; for a Man may, keeping his Breath or Spirit in, ſupport himſelf poſſibly under that weight; which, letting his Breath go, he would immediately ſink, and lie down under the Burden of.

Not the greatneſs of Evils, but the littleneſs of our own Mind and Heart, may be the chief Cauſe of the quicker ſenſe of the uneaſineſs; elſe, how could any man bear greater Troubles than another with leſs difficulty, but being more courageous under them? Wherefore be ſtrong or courageous; if not, *only be ſtrong, and very courageous*, was the Counſel or Command of God to *Joſhua*; as you may read, if not alſo repeatedly, in his firſt Chapter;

Chapter; though *Joſhua* might be valiantly enclined, or of himſelf no Coward; for if he had been ſo defective, may be he had never been employed in ſuch an Affair, as to ſucceed *Moſes* in Government, and to lead the Children of *Iſrael* over *Jordan* into an Enemy's Land.

Is it not pleaſing to Heaven, when, if need be, men being troubled (for God does not willingly afflict or grieve the Children of Men,) they ſtruggle ſo with Adverſity, as to quit themſelves as manfully, as manfully attack'd; though God may delight rather in the proſperity of his Servant?

It is a Pleaſure unto moſt Men, *Gladiators* eſpecially, to ſee a little ſtrength upheld by a great deal of Courage and Art, to the well quitting of it ſelf; and the fairer it is done, the more delightful to the Beholder, and Praiſe to the Undertaker and Performer.

Wherefore knowing that the Trial of Faith worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope, and that Hope maketh not (nor will it ſuffer to be made) *aſhamed; having peace with God, rejoyce in hope of the Glory of God; and not only ſo, but glory in Tribulations alſo; we muſt through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*: So that a timorous Nature might begin to fear its Filiation and Son-ſhip, ſhould it meet with no Tribulation, ſince it is ſaid, we muſt enter into the Kingdom of God through much. It might juſtly cauſe Fear, and make a Man to doubt that he was not in the right way that leadeth unto Life; like a Traveller might juſtly ſuſpect he was out of his Road, if he met with none of thoſe Waymarks he was told of meeting with in it. Are not

Men

Men to *count it all joy when they ſhall fall into divers Temptations*; though leſt the Evil thereof overcome us, we are to pray againſt them? What Captain would ſet the worſt, and moſt feeble, cowardly, and unarmed Men to the hotteſt piece of Service, ſince it is not for his Glory to have his Souldiers vanquiſhed in Fight?

'Tis a Sign God looks upon them as his Champions, whom he ſingles out to fight for him; and 'tis a ſign he has taken unto him the whole Armour of God; or if not, would it not even conſtrain him now ſo to do, if but in his own defence, being ſo forced, as it were, on to ſpiritual Conflicts? May it not ſeem to follow, that they who are moſt ſtrongly tempted, are ſtrongeſt alſo, at leaſt very ſtrong in the Faith? Elſe, if vehemently aſſaulted, and not proportionably enabled to bear it, where was their way open'd for them to eſcape? And we know that God is faithful, and ſuffers none to be tempted above their ſtrength. Wherefore do not loſe the Good of ſo many Evils; let them not be thrown away, and loſt upon you.

The moſt rank Poyſon may be ſo prepared and made up, as to become medicinal, yea, a moſt ſovereign Remedy; even Croſſes and Afflictions have their proper uſe, (though bitter Cups) as bitter Potions may be wholeſome when skilfully prepar'd and applied eſpecially, as every dram of the Croſs is rightly and duly weigh'd out unto the Sons of *Adam*; and ſo merciful is our Heavenly Father in the medicinal part, his *Diſpenſatory*, as that, when his Wrath and Vengeance lay ſo heavy upon him who ſtood in the place of Sinners, the bitter Cup was thus ſweetned, as being drunk an Health to all the World; thus ſeeing of the travail of his Soul,

Soul, he was ſatisfied that however he ſhould juſtifie many.

How long Study did Heathen Men undergo, how great Pains were they at to arrive at the Art of enduring with Patience? Have not we in greater Helps, more divine Rules, and more ſtrong Comfort in the God of all Patience and Conſolation, a nearer way to be ſo perfect? What do Men lay in, and lay up for, all their Life long, but againſt a time of need, when-e'er it ſhall come? And the patiently afflicted is actually exerciſed in that Duty which the moſt Learned Men, and moſt ſtrong Chriſtians are labouring after, as excellent. And what ſays *Eccleſiaſticus*, that moſt admirably Moral, if not more than half Divine Book, *Chap. 2? Wo to fearful hearts, and faint hands; ſuch believe not, and therefore ſhall not be defended*, ſays he. Wo unto you that have loſt Patience; and what will ye do when the Lord ſhall viſit you? We are not utterly to faint, though we do not ſee any probable humane Means of being brought out of trouble, when affliction is laid upon our Loins, when we are ſmitten into the place of Dragons, and in the deep, when we cannot ſo much as hope, but againſt Hope, much leſs believe to ſee ſuch Goodneſs of God ſhewed us in the Land of the Living, as we may poſſibly earneſtly deſire and wiſh, while we cannot ſo much as hope for it; and if holy *David* thought he ſhould have fainted without ſome hope even of this Life; the Saints of old, which we yet come ſo ſhort of, were not ſuch Patterns to us, as that we ſhould not ſo much as try or deſire to exceed them, they being Men of like Paſſions with us; and *Jonah*, though a true Prophet of God, might be ſo pettiſhly angry, as many men

would ſcorn to be, who never yet ſo much as pretended to any thing of a Prophetick Spirit.

Patience forbids Men to offer their Affronts, being not taken as ſuch; or if ſo, quietly put up. Indeed, would it not be too like thoſe inert Animals among themſelves, if the Aſs kick us, ſhould we kick him again? However ſome may look upon the peaceable taking a ſmite on the one Cheek, to be giving a Man's ſelf a great Box on the other Ear; as if ſtripes without Wounds, were not better than Wounds without cauſe; for what is done exceeding the Merits of the Cauſe, may it not be ſaid ſo far to be done without it? Not that I would be bribed to become Advocate, and plead the Cauſe of Cowardice; but ſtir Men up to that greater Magnanimity of Mind, to combate themſelves, and come off more than Conquerors, even ſuch as are able to take and rule over a City; ſuſtain, and abſtain, were thought to be the *Compendium* or Abridgment of Man's Duty.

But the ill-natured World (that counts Good Nature, Folly) is careful to laugh that out of it, which will not comport and faſhion it ſelf according to it: If the corrupt Judgment, debauch'd Fancy, or capricious Humour of an Age, if miſtaken Men have a Mind to lop off any particular branch of Duty, (though Chriſt be the Vine that bleeds for it,) What is it for Men of corrupt Minds, of reprobate Senſe, to call it ſome waſhy Bough, ſome crooked Twig, ſome pernicious Sucker, not uniformly compoſing it ſelf to the beauty of the whole Tree?

Again, cannot ſome make misfortune ſerve for matter of ſport? How much more may ſuch play with their proſperity, and pleaſe themſelves in it!

it! It may ſeem to be the mark of a greater Mind, rather to deſpiſe than repine, though a becoming ſenſe may be beſt of all; we are taught to give thanks in all things, and to bleſs the Name of God when he taketh away, as well as when he giveth. But how inconſiſtent are theſe things with Murmurings and Impatience!

Now ſince we are apt to be impatient at what goes againſt us, (for one cannot be angry at what pleaſes him altogether) Why do we not make every thing for us? Does not the Bee gather from off a Weed, as though it was a ſweet Flower? The Sea is not made freſh by the Rivers continually running into it, that can turn them into its own Nature: And if we our ſelves would not make it ſo, could any evil happen to us? Might not all things conſpire, as in one, to work together for our good? For that is Good to us, that makes us better, though it be more humble, more dependant in our own thoughts upon God; and that is Evil to us, which makes us worſe, whether more proud and lifted up till apt to forget God, more vicious in Life and Morals, be it otherwiſe never ſo great a worldly Good, never ſo deſirable, and to be rejoyced in.

He might be thought an unhappy Man, by Heathen Antiquity, whom never any thing went againſt: How could ſuch an one know whether he could bear the leaſt misfortune? Or, how could he be ſaid to have all things befal him after his Wiſh and Deſire, that had them go before it, outrun, or prevent it? Was not Fortune of old thought to paſs by ſome with diſdain, and ſeek her Equals to encounter with? As who cares to purſue ignoble Game?

It

It is the work of Patience to ſee the Mind be adorned with quietneſs and meekneſs of Spirit, in every State and Condition whatſoever, ſuitably and becomingly; as Men are to be cloathed in Body, with agreeable modeſt Garb, according to time and place, without reſpect had to which they may be very antick in that, which at another would appear decent enough: though a Man does not caſt Firebrands in his rage, and tear himſelf in his Anger, though he be not ſo frantick as to play the Mad-man; yet if his Mind be fretted and ſorely galled, though he does not ſhew it, like a wild Bull in a Net, that is full of toſſing to and fro. If Reaſon only be blinded, it may as well as another blind Guide, lead into the Ditch. If God tryeth the Godly, till the Pit be digged up for the Ungodly, does not the light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, work out abundance of Work for ſo ſhort a time? An exceeding, even an Eternal Weight of Glory; which, if it wait, tarry for it; for yet a little while, and the God of Peace ſhall bruiſe *Satan* under your Feet, ſhewing who are his, not by proceeding according to the Rule of Men's Natural Temper, or the meaſure of Weakneſs and bodily Infirmity, or readineſs of *Satan* deſiring to ſift any; but giving him the Lye, ſhall proceed by the Law of Mercy and Truth, and till then the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly Man out of Temptation: Is not every Man, according to him, the forger of his own Fortune? And Fortune, ſays one, overcomes us, unleſs it be wholly overcome by us. And he that might have been ſet free among the *Jews*, at the Year of Releaſe, and would not, was faſter bound than before. If none were blind, but ſuch as had their Eyes bored out for Villainy,

Villainy, it would be a diſgrace to be blind; if none but the worſt of men were afflicted, to ſtand in need of it, Patience might be ſcandalous; but after you have performed the Commandment, as ſome might call it, you have done it but in part, if you do not wait with patience *for the glorious appearing of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to render to every one according to his work; to them who by patience in well-doing have ſought for Glory and Immortality, eternal Life.*

Again, *why ſhould a living Man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his Sins?* when-as God might rather complain, that the Wickedneſs was ſuch as forced him in a manner to puniſh. And if thou complainſt of Sin, God might juſtly withdraw his grace, and ſo ſuffer thee to fall into that again which thou hadſt once commited; thus one Sin may be the puniſhment of another; as Drunkenneſs might be enjoyned as a ſevere Penance for former exceſs; was it not unlawful again to be committed. If fear of Evil trouble thee, a Miſt at a diſtance ſeems more dark than to one that is in it, who may ſee well enough to direct his goings for the moſt part.

If preſent continued evil be thy complaint, is not perpetuity of Misfortune eaſier ſometimes than the firſt Onſet? Uſe makes the very Fetters of the Legs lighter, and Aſſiduity will diſcover a glimmering Light in a dark Dungeon.

Though ye that ſee no Light, put your truſt in the Lord, when the united power of Darkneſs charges upon you. But if any temporal Evil annoy us, much leſs let that have ſuch power over us as to make us behave our ſelves frowardly in the ſight of God: Let us cry unto him out of the

the deep and horrible Pit, when we ſtick faſt in Mire and Clay: *Call upon me in trouble*, ſays God, *and I will hear thee, and thou ſhalt praiſe me.* If we are ſick, he can make all our Bed in that Sickneſs; and it is he that muſt ſave, or we periſh; for vain is the help of Man; if our Sickneſs be ſo ſore, that there be no Breath left in us, then to *die is gain; for we know that if this earthly Tabernacle was diſſolved, we have a Building not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens:* So then, take (my Brethren) the Prophets, who have ſpoken in the Name of the Lord, for an example of ſuffering Affliction, and of Patience; propoſe ſome of the beſt for your example, and then if you come not up to them, yet aiming to fly at their pitch, you may ſoar aloft above the more ordinary and common flight of Men; take the Prophets, thoſe Noble Examples of ſuffering Affliction with an equal Mind, not thinking all the World out of courſe, when it went ill with them, and ſay, *I am no better than my Fathers were.* But ſay not thou (*our Life being ſo hid with Chriſt in God*) if God does for a moment hide his Face, that you might more earneſtly ſeek it; (as, *Iſa.* 45. 5. *Verily thou art a God that hideſt thy ſelf;*) ſay not thou preſently, *I am caſt out of the ſight of thine eyes;* but rather with *Hagar* in Affliction, *Thou, God, ſeeſt me.* For though when making haſte, *Pſal.* 31. holy *David* was ready to uſe the ſame Words of Diſtruſt and Rejection; yet, in the next Verſe, he ſays, *Nevertheleſs thou heardeſt the voice of my Prayer, when I cried unto thee.* Let us not farther provoke him by impatience under the Rod (which we ſhould humbly kiſs,) but hear it, and him that hath appointed it, that the very Rod may comfort us; which he will burn

after our correction and amendment, though it be the ungodly that are a Scourge of his; and do not irritate thy ſelf, giving a Sting to what might innocently be taken into your Boſom, without any harm.

We are told that divers went to ſalute *Job*'s Dunghill; and ſome might think St. *Paul*'s Impriſonment more glorious than his Rapture into the third Heaven: Indeed the Church Militant, how deſpiſed ſoever, is the Gracious Mother of the Glorious Church Triumphant, that is the Lamb's Spouſe, and that has God for her Father. Was not our Lord (like unto whoſe Sorrow was there ever any?) tempted of Satan, and crucified? Did he not deſcend into Hell, before he went up to Glory? Went up! or ſhall I rather ſay, went down into Heaven? For to him Heaven is a Valley; he humbleth himſelf to behold the things done there.

Behold we count them happy that endure; thus alſo that may ſhine in the dark, which a more perfect and clear Day might oppreſs with Light, and obſcure; though indeed when Darkneſs firſt meets with Light, it may cauſe a puzzling one to be made; and though who can ſo put off humane Nature, as to be utterly void of all ſenſe of outward Afflictions, any more than he can chuſe to feel no Smart or Pain, in ſome bodily Diſtempers? Yet to apply Sorrow to Grief, may ſometimes be as improper as Drink in a Dropſie, which in the end, inhances it.

Though, *in the day of adverſity, conſider*, to be ſenſeleſs, does not anſwer the end of the loving Correction (that at the laſt might be made to do us good) why ſhould ſuch be ſmitten any more?

So

So that there is great Prudence required in a ſuffering ſtate, as to a Man's Behaviour, to carry himſelf equally humble and brave; while as ſorrowing, yet rejoycing to be dealt with as Sons; wherefore let Chriſtian Fortitude be coupled with awful Fear; for every ſuch Thunderbolt cometh from a right-aiming hand, and with a Deſign of rowzing and awakening us, rather than conſuming; and indeed though *ſufficient to the day be the evil thereof*; yet there may ſometimes be need of ſomething extraordinary to wean men, and keep their Souls low, as weaned Children; for Satan, though his Malice be reſtrained, has a Chain's length, whether to trouble, or try to lift up (that we might fall into his condemnation) through ſpiritual Pride (the moſt irrational kind) which God does ſet his Face againſt to bring down in any, as ſome may ſeem almoſt to be proud of their voluntary Humility.

Farther, our Church prays as earneſtly to be deliver'd *in all time of her Wealth*, as *in all time of her Tribulation*, and not to be without Affliction, (ſays that Father) but to overcome Affliction, is true Bleſſedneſs.

And though ſome Beaſts may be made madder with baiting, inſtead of being tamed; as Fury is the madder for its Chain, like Fire pent in, or as a Torch depreſs'd, that flairs; or a Torrent damm'd up, that foams, and rages, and ſwells, till it burſt its Banks; yet the Ark, the more the Waters of the Flood prevailed, the higher and nearer did they bear it to Heaven; ſo far from ſhipwracking of it, that it rode the ſafer: Thus the Seas that deſtroyed the *Egyptians*, were a wall to the *Iſraelites*; an howling Deſart leads them

to the Glory of all Lands; and till they come thither, the barren Wilderneſs yields them the Bread from Heaven, Angel's Food; and the flinty Rock guſhes out Water; and may not Men ſtill without a Miracle, ſuck Honey out of the ſtony Rock? Might they not wax as valiant in Fight, (the Chriſtian Warfare) as he once was in a jocous Speech, who, when one told him, there was an Army coming againſt him, ſo great and numerous as to darken the Sun, merrily anſwered, Then we ſhall fight in the Shade? When in mighty Woe, or very evil Caſe, Now I ſee a Danger equal to my Mind, ſaid one, ſo great in diſtreſs, as though he would triumph over Affliction, that it might be afraid to aſſault him any more, as weary of his Conqueſts.

And have we not a Cloud of Examples in the glorious Company of the Apoſtles, the goodly Fellowſhip of the Prophets, and the whole Army of Martyrs, when tortured, not baſely accepting Deliverance?

And if every common Vertue cannot turn Misfortune into Joy, and unite Glorying to Suffering; yet in whatſoever ſtate at leaſt an high Contentment is not found, take heed that humane Reaſon be not actually engaged againſt the divine one: God, who ſpake out the World, or but will'd, and all things were made, and ſtood faſt, is able to do for us above what we can either ask or think, (or how were we made at firſt out of nothing, wonderfully, and in excellent Wiſdom, and great Power, if not able?) and was he not willing too, Chriſt had never ſuffered ſuch things; but yet may he not apply Sickneſs to cure our other Diſeaſes, or Pain, as a counter-poyſon to our Sin, without

without being fooliſhly charged (of us) with hatred, or ſetting us as a Mark to ſhoot at?

God never flatters any in Sin; would you have him then like a deceitful Surgeon, ſtroak the Place he is going to lance and let out Corruption at?

Is there any State or Condition that Man would be good in, who is not poſitively ſo in the preſent one? Why ſhould not the Love of God invite, and even conſtrain him now, as much as in what would not be ſo merciful to him? For God may bring a good Man down ſafely, to prevent ſome Fall or Slip; and lift others up, whom he ſees Proſperity would make better ſtill.

There is a ſecret working behind the Curtain; (for do we not ſay, The whole world acts a Play?) there is an hand of Providence unſeen, croſs-leading Right. Thus, was not the firſt Link of the Chain of Fate ſaid to be tied to the Foot of *Jupiter*'s Chair? And if we give reverence to the Fathers of our Fleſh, whom we may afterward thank for what we received with Tears, though they might correct us for their own pleaſure or humour, to try the Diſpoſition of their Children; how much more ought we to bear our heavenly Father's Correction with Patience and Thankſgiving, whenſoever by any manner of Adverſity it ſhall pleaſe his gracious Goodneſs to viſit us, that we might be partakers of his Holineſs.

There ſhould be no greater Comfort to Chriſtian Perſons, our Church thinks, than to be made like unto Chriſt by ſuffering patiently Adverſities and Troubles; which, through Faith, too ſtrong for Senſe, may be born with generous Fortitude, and Chriſtian Courage, much better than when

in trouble, to help forward the Affliction. We are taught, not only to be patient in the continuance, but alſo not to be weary in well-doing, not ſo to be worn out as to yield to the Beſiegers. Faint not when rebuked; in wearineſs the Body requires refreſhment, the Spirit renewing, when the active power is weakened, and the Principles of Motion dull'd, and a weary Man's ſtrength is abated very much; but when Men faint, the vital power retireth, leaving the Body lifeleſs or unactive, ſometimes, without ſo much Motion, as to ſhew their Soul is ſtill in them; *as the outward Man decayeth, let the inner one be renewed day by day; for God will not contend for ever*; if he ſhould, then the Spirits indeed would fail before him; but by waiting upon God, tarrying the Lord's Leiſure, may we not be enabled to wait ſtill the more upon him, having Grace ſtrengthened by exerciſe?

If we live by Senſe only, what do we believing? Does not the Wit and Induſtry of ſinful Men eaſily (if not pleaſurably in their falſe account) break through all difficulty, as a poor thing to put a Bar to their Luſts? 'Tis true (through what means ſoever) ſore Affliction may almoſt indiſpoſe, even for Duty it ſelf, notwithſtanding it be generally ſent to quicken us in it, or cauſe us to return to it; and Men's Courage ſinking, this may ſlacken their Labour, which ſhould always abound in the Lord.

And though Affliction may not be ſo skilfully managed, being uſually accompanied with darkneſs, it is nevertheleſs the Touchſtone of Sincerity; and notwithſtanding it may be another Affliction, not to know the cauſe of one; yet how many

Troubles

Troubles might be waded out of, would not Men make them their watry Bed to lie down in ſorrow in! For as Man is out of his right way when he ſins (which may be therefore called going wrong) ſo is he off from his End, when he ſuffers. Why might we not then ſend a bold Challenge with the Apoſtle, to things preſent (though never ſo bad) and to things to come, if they might be worſe? Why ſhould not we ſet our Faces againſt evil as undauntedly, as impudent People againſt Modeſty or the Truth? making them harder than a Rock. Tho when we are chained to Misfortune as Gally-Slaves tugging at the Oar, we muſt not deſpiſe God's Wrath, as we ought not to ſlight his Long-ſuffering and Forbearance; though we need not bring particular Sorrow into the common, which every man has right to by Birth.

And though wicked Men, or Satan himſelf be the Inſtrument to repay the Vengeance; *Is there Evil in the City, that the Lord hath not done?* And if the Devil ſeem never ſo impatient to execute Wrath, he cannot exceed God's Commiſſion gone out, whether againſt Body or Goods: Thus ſays he concerning *Job*; *haſt thou not made an Hedge about him?* (though to Man inviſible) he ſaw well enough there was no Gap to enter, ſo as to break in upon *Job*.

Wherefore let the Soul call in all her ſcattered Forces to her Aid, imbodying them; let her gather up together all the Succours Reaſon affordeth, as a looſe Garment catch'd up and held cloſe, to keep Reaſon warm in the Throne: For what is Madneſs, but being out of the power of Reaſon, whether through Anger in the ſtorminеſs thereof, or an Hurricane of Woe, ſinking Men as in a

Whirlpool? Though when God calls to Mourning, when Chriſt bids us weep for our ſelves, &c. And when the Spirit of God helps us to ſearch our own Hearts in the Windings and ſubtile Labyrinths of it; let us fetch out the accurſed thing, and ſlay and mortifie in us, what *would not that he ſhould have the Rule over us*: For as the Bird by wandering, as the Swallow by flying, ſo the Curſe cauſeleſs does not come: *But as a Whip for the Horſe, or as a Bridle for the Aſs*; ſo is the Rod for Men's Backs, to fetch out the folly ſo faſt bound up in their Heart from their very Childhood, e'er Reaſon could prevent its growth.

And where Men are not brawny, or inſenſible, as though ſtrung with Wire inſtead of Veins; but are cloathed with the fleſhly Nature in the tenderneſs thereof, humbling them under the mighty Hand of God; there the end of the *Lord is to be Gracious and of tender Mercy, repenting him of the Evil.*

Fervent Prayer.

WHen we are driven Home to him, as ſome People may be beſt frighted into their Wits, ſo beſt perſwaded to take unto them Words and return unto the Lord, ſeeking in Fervent Prayer unto him while he may yet be found; and Prayer in Fervour, freſh glowing from the Heart, as a Sacrifice kindled with Celeſtial Fire,

or a Coal from the Altar, knocks aloud at the Gates of Heaven, as though like *Moſes* it would not let God alone, is like Thunder reverſed, by which, when imbodied in an Army, Men do in a manner take Heaven by an Holy Violence; and our Petitions with pleaſing importunity for God's Grace and Holy Spirit, may be the only acceptable rude Petitioners; and it is no ſmall privilege of having the Ear of the King of Heaven, (that is ſtyled, Thou that heareſt the Prayer) mixing our Words with Chriſt's Interceſſion; and what upon Earth is more ſtrong than one given unto Prayer, to prevail over the Almighty, or to have Power with God? But though Prayer be the very Key of Heaven to open it, for its Bleſſings to deſcend; (as we read of the Prophet concerning Rain;) yet a Key may not always open at once trying; he that prays well, is like to live well; for how ſhall God not give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it? And how ſhall Men ſo readily commit thoſe Sins they have but ſo lately bewailed or prayed againſt? And do we not know, or are we not to be humbly aſſured, that we receive what we ask according to his Will? Wherefore, like *Jacob*, wreſtle for the Bleſſing, till the Darkneſs be diſperſed, the Day dawn, the Light ſpring, and the Sun once more ſhine upon thee; whoever ſitteſt in Darkneſs, call upon him who freely giveth, and bids us ask, that we might receive, *and the Day-ſpring from on high ſhall viſit you*, or to be ſure your Prayer ſome way or other return into your own Boſom, and that not empty; *for he that asketh, receiveth*; God's good Spirit accompanying his own Ordinance; and whether you think your Hands have found any thing or nothing: Does any ſerve God for nought?

God,

God, who desires our service for our own good, that we ordering our conversation aright, might (through the Merits of his dear Son, and through Faith in his Name) be meet to see the Salvation of God, and to partake of the Inheritance with the Saints in Light? And be assured, while we cry, *How long, O Lord, holy and true!* he remains so; and is more forward to hear, than we to pray, as loving to crown his own Work; so that after he has given and granted, he may be rather more ready still to do the same, than to shut up his hand towards them that follow hard after him, and do not only hover about that sacred Ordinance, as a formal Fashionist makes a Visit, and cares not whether his Friend be to be found or not.

And the Faithful may be described thus; *The Generation of them that seek God, and they that seek his Face, that their Souls might live, enjoy Good*: And what does the Sun lose, if Men hide themselves from its bright Influence? Who need to go away sorrowful from God's Presence, when having made their Supplication before him? Or, is it not a mitigation of it, to have sought after him in his own way, whether our Soul be so solaced or not with his Loving Kindness more manifesting it self to us, which is so much better than the Life it self? Which if we would be more assured of finding, let us pray after *David*'s manner, *I will keep thy Statutes; O forsake me not utterly; I entreated thy Favour with my whole heart, I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy Precepts: Hear me, O Lord, I will keep thy Testimonies; hold thou me up, I will have respect unto thy Law alway unto the end; O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk in my House with a perfect heart.* And if we thus pray, let

let us rather believe that God hears our Prayer, in denying many of our Petitions, than think it cast out from before him, when we have made our Supplication with our whole heart; and though God love Mercy above Sacrifice; yet it is great to be petition'd, and the Glory of Christ is thus described; *There shall be a Root of Jesse, unto him shall the Gentiles seek.* And what if God keep Prayer by him sometime unanswered? Can we tell when our Prayer is accepted, and when refused? because either of these may be, and we still afflicted. Did not the *Israelites* continue their Cry unto God in distress, as seeing no Means of help afforded? Yet *why dost thou cry unto me?* Bid them go on; there was a way opening which they yet saw not.

Many may request and desire that of God, which he may already so have granted, as that it shall be effected; who therefore might say with the King, *Why speakest thou any more of thy Matters?* I have pass'd it into an Act of the High Court of Heaven, that so and so it shall be; tho' men not being able to discern such things as may lie hid in the Mind of God, do well to continue asking; and God you may be sure always gives the promised Good, whether the desired one or not. And our Prayers are upon the File, our Petitions noted in his Book, who may wait to be gracious; for though his help be always ready, yet not so precipitate as to hinder its Maturity. Wherefore *seek the Lord and his Strength, seek his Face evermore; for the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him faithfully,* (and it is pity that the Means of Grace, and of our Help for Infirmities, should by us be made weak and infirm themselves through indisposition of otherwise sound Minds)

spare

ſpare not for ſpiritual Coſt when you offer unto God; let Prayer be rich in Faith, *&c.* wait alſo for God, truſt in his Mercy, patiently abide, always praiſing him more and more, who never faileth them that ſeek him, nor is ſlack, as ſome Men count Slackneſs; (though Delay it ſelf ſharpen our Deſires, as well as other Difficulty) and proportionably to them is the Bleſſing of Good many times reckoned more or leſs valuable, being more or leſs poinant, as an hungry man that is long kept from Food, reliſhes it the better; and if by waiting for what we deſire, we are better fitted to prize it, it may be a double Bleſſing in that reſpect, as well as alſo come in greater fulneſs: Thus *Hannah* not only obtains a Son, but a Prophet too, and perhaps ſhe had never ſo dedicated her Son to God, had ſhe not continued ſo long without him, and with ſuch ſorrowfulneſs of Heart, or grief of Spirit, prayed for him; by long tarrying (for Men ſhould pray always, and not faint) we may know the better how to employ the Mercy to God's Glory, and our own greater Good; wherefore lift up again *the hands that hang down, and ſtrengthen the feeble knees*; if thou receive not in the very ſame kind that it is ask'd, yet may thy Prayer be of great Efficacy towards the obtaining of Good for thee in ſuch a way as ſhall be ſeen beſt for God's Glory and thy Relief.

A Child may ask Food, and be fed, though not always with what kind he moſt deſires; and yet the Parent may love him never the worſe; perhaps the better; as when the Child asks blindly and ignorantly: Certainly it is not in vain to ſerve God, though ſome walk ſo mournfully before him.

When

When Men are about to prefer a Petition to an earthly King, they may expect to wait ere they are vouchſafed his Preſence, and ſtill doubtful of his Grace and Favour to grant them their Requeſt; and can they always ſo much as hope to receive a Denial from him, without ſomething alſo of his Anger and Diſpleaſure; ſo bringing it may be, a Curſe upon themſelves, and not a Bleſſing? Now ſhall men upon all occaſions run to the great King of Heaven and Earth, by whom others reign, and refuſe to tarry till he pleaſe to come unto them? or go away diſcontented if he does not immediately hear and help them; though he does not upbraid with any demerit, or chide in diſpleaſure?

And though God is not a Man, to be wholly taken up with other Buſineſs, *&c.* yet there may be fit and proper Times and Places for Audience; ſuch as the Lord's Day, in the Congregation of Believers in the Temple, where Prayers are twiſted like a threefold Cord, and ſtronger.

If any be troubled with Satan, did not the Woman of *Canaan*, when ſhe came to our Lord for her Daughter, that was ſo, make an Anſwer out of his Silence? And was not her Faith great, as well as her Humility, in an Anſwer more diſcouraging than Silence?

Did not our Lord ſtay away from his Friend *Lazarus*, as though on purpoſe, when he knew he was ſick; for the encreaſe of others Faith? And it is not neceſſary that God always ſhew ſome Token of Good upon a Man here; it is enough that he afterward ſhew him his Glory.

The Diſciples might be troubled at the hearing of their Maſter's departing out of this world,

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to go to the Father; nevertheleſs what ſays he? *It is expedient for you, that I go hence, that the Comforter may come, which was to abide for ever.*

Our Prayers concerning any thing properly belonging to this World's Good, ſhould be limited, and thus reſtrained, *If it ſeem good unto God*, who may with-hold in Mercy; as alſo ſuffer to be troubled of very Faithfulneſs; of whoſe bounteous Mercy alone it is that any of our Prayers are at all accepted, even thoſe for Grace, and God's Holy Spirit, to enable us the better to ſerve him. Many times our Petitions may pleaſe Heaven, and return not empty into our own Boſom, while God may ſeem to take no notice of the Requeſt. But to what ſerves our Faith? that is, to believe what we ſee not, to make an Anſwer out of God's Silence.

But let us ſuſpect any thing rather than God's Goodneſs, or defect on his part; our own Unworthineſs, or Doubtfulneſs, our own Weakneſs, Blindneſs, Ignorance, in requeſting we know not what; or Coldneſs in asking, teaching to be denied; as it is the Affection that gives Life to, and Chriſtens the Action, we are told of one that taught his Parrot to prate the Lord's Prayer; and I wiſh none utter it ſometimes with as little knowledge or attention, who ſhould, like *Jacob*, wreſtle for a Bleſſing, and after our beſt performance, and the putting forth all our ſtrength, 'tis well if we come not off lamely.

A man may have a clear and plain Object before his Eye, and not ſee it, if his Thoughts are ſcattered, or at leaſt, if intent upon another thing in his Mind, and ſo again not hear a Sound, though near him; for it is not the Eye that ſees, or the

Ear

Ear that hears; but the Soul, by the help of the Organs of the Ear, hears, and looks out of the Body, at thoſe Caſements, the Eyes; without which, it would be dungeon'd up.

We are not to ſet up a Mark, and then ſhoot at Rovers: Nay, and when a man has raiſed his Devotion to the higheſt pitch, it will not keep up of it ſelf, ſtanding as at the Salley; but rather leap, as at that, without a ſtrict hand; if not rather like Water once heat, though never ſo hot, that taken off from the Fire, that which ſhould maintain and keep it up in its fervour, grows colder than ever it was before; thus Iron that is ſo malleable while in the Fire, may, for being often heat and quench'd again, become but the harder; like Veſtal Fire, the Heart is to be kept warm, if not always ſo freſh and glowing, as when in an *Agony, praying more earneſtly*, Luke 22. 44. But if Men are never hotter, and their Spirits more fired, than in Diſputes about Religion, why ſhould they not be ſo in the more immediate Acts of it; but careleſs and remiſs, like the *Armenian* Dragons, that have been ſaid to ſpit Fire, and yet to have cold Bodies? When Men contend for the Faith, they do it earneſtly, *Jude* v. 3. as though Religion was ſick, like *David* for his Child, they beſtir themſelves in its behalf; but afterward perhaps ſhew their greater moderation to all Men, ſerving God, as though they ſerved him not; but take heed of offering ſuch a Smother and Smoak in his Noſtrils, a Fire not well blown up: Without fervency, does the Prayer of the righteous avail, that is ſo prevalent, when ardent? Why ſhould we think God will regard it, if we mind it not our ſelves? Was not acceptable Sacrifice of old offer'd up in flames?

And

And was not Incense burnt before it smelt so sweet? If we would have the lifting up our Hands to be as a Sacrifice; or if we would offer up the Calves of our Lips; must they not be touch'd as with a Coal from the Altar still? and that ye become not like Waves, tossed; or as those, in asking, that might look to receive nothing at the hand of God, but a denial, *Ask in Faith, nothing doubting.*

Assurance of Faith.

NOW there are several degrees of Assent; there is a Conjecture; there is an Opinion; there is a Weakness of Faith; and there is a Faith that comes up to an Assurance, and that a full Assurance, by which we say we know.

There may be in many a light inclination of the Mind to believe, and a slender hope conceived; or perhaps a suspicious Knowledge; but let us know, and be assured; let us so have all Faith in such an Assurance, even as in a plain evidence of things not seen, have it as in the substance of things hoped for; the weaker things of God being stronger than the strongest of Men. Is not the Evidence of good things yet for to come, upon this account built on a surer foundation of Truth, than what we see, and personally know? And how do Men know Trees better than by their Fruits? *A good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit; a good Man out of*

the

the good Treasure of his Heart bringeth forth that which is good, as an evil Man out of the evil Treasure of his, what is evil; wherefore be not deceived, that which a Man sows, the same shall he reap; he that soweth to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting. If ye live after the Flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortifie the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live. It is not enough to nick-name our selves Christians, if we live contrary to our holy Profession. Is it not impudent, as well as cotradictious, to say, *I am honest nevertheless, though I appear apparently and palpably at the same time to be a Cheat?* And though I do not always find opportunity of slurring Dishonesty; yet, do we count them in perfect health, even on what we however call their Well-Day, who do expect and prepare for the constant set return of some lingering, and wasting Distemper, still hanging about them?

He that is washed, would fain be clean every whit, not only in hands, but heart also, purified in that, in its very Affections, not fluttering only sometimes, as with unequal Wings, and so falling down again, nor proceeding indecently uneven, as with the Legs of the Lame; but has his Life all of one piece, being set in a good way; or if he falls, is like the Sheep in the Dirt, uneasie; not like the Swine, when wash'd, still delighting to wallow in the Mire.

We are bid to examine our selves, whether we are in the Faith or not, to prove our own selves; which, why should we be called upon to do, if we could, when we had so done, by no means find or perceive whether we were in the Faith, or whether

ther we were Reprobates? Does not the Scripture make a wide difference between good Men and bad?

Are not the Works of the Flesh manifest in their black Catalogue? And the Works of the Spirit as plainly set down? Are not the Children of God and the Children of the Devil distinguishable? Know ye not whether Christ be in you, or whether Sin and the Devil reign? Are Darkness and Light both so alike? The ways to Heaven and Hell are contrary Ways; and will God take one to Glory, and cast out another into utter darkness, without a vast difference in their personal Qualifications? say to one, *Well done good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; come ye blessed, inherit the Kingdom*; as though to reign together with him: and to another, *Go ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels: (bind the unprofitable Servant hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of Teeth*; weeping, but not a drop of Water to cool the Tongue.) If the two are not mightily differenced in their Image, one having the Image of God, the other of the Devil his Father, whose Works he did and would do? For that is the rejection, *Depart, ye that are workers of Iniquity*; and such are prepared till fitted for destruction.

But if there was no way of knowing what our after-state shall be, (which God's Word, that must at that day judge us, will now acquaint us with, accusing, or excusing, and acquitting,) what ease or comfort should we have in this Life? Is it not a trouble always to be in doubt? If our Title to our earthly Inheritance be question'd in Law, and doubtfully

fully diſputed, can we always be ſo diſpoſed to rejoyce in ſuch an hazardous condition? And though we are to *work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling*, (by which underſtand Awe and Reverence, not doubt and dreadful ſuſpicion;) yet why ſhould not I as firmly believe Chriſt's written Word, ſpeaking Peace, promiſing Salvation; as if I had heard him orally ſpeaking to me in particular, ſaying, Fear not, I am with thee, and will bring thee to Glory, *I ſay unto thee thou ſhalt one Day be with me in Paradiſe?* And though we are not thereby Juſtified, if we know nothing by our ſelves; yet if our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.

But how can any Man think, that if he will but baniſh all fear, God will ſave him only becauſe he did unreaſonably preſume he would, though continuing to do thoſe things for which the Wrath of God cometh on the Children of Diſ-obedience? Could any reaſonable Man think ſuch his caſe ſafe, did his Salvation depend upon ſuch perſwaſion? Would our Lord be at ſuch expence of Miracles, at ſo much pains to do and ſuffer ſuch things, only that Men might ſay, Truly, I do believe all that is written concerning him was accompliſhed, and do rejoyce that he has born our grief? He came to turn every one from his wicked way, and to be our Guide and Example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps who did no Sin, neither was guile found in his Mouth: Our Prophet to teach us, our King to rule over us, as well as merciful High-Prieſt to offer up himſelf a Lively Sacrifice for us. *Wherefore be ye Holy, as he is Holy; for without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord: Be ye merciful as our Heavenly Father is merciful*, and hope not vainly to be

made like him hereafter, unless Heaven be begun, be entred upon here; *for as the Tree falleth so it lyeth:* Every one that hath a well-grounded Hope, purifieth himself; wherefore be not deceived, God is not to be mock'd.

But then though the Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest; yet if the Sea before wrought and was tempestuous, curling its angry Brow; if Christ be taken up into the Ship, there follows a great Calm. And though we cannot go to him, when weary, so bodily, as by contignation or gross touch of the Hem of his Garment, to be made perfectly Whole of what Distemper soever; yet he is still to be approach'd, and does still bid go in Peace; Vertue does go out of him so as to heal the broken-hearted; Physick is still administred, and wholesome nourishment, by him to all true Believers, that like Branches which remain in the Vine are fed, though rotten putrefied Members receive no more than a Wooden Leg from the Body Natural.

Wherefore be not faithless, but believing: for though happy we, for whose sake God has sworn; yet miserable we, if we believe not him Swearing, if there be such an *Anti-Abraham* and Father of Unbelievers.

And though the well or ill disposition of Humane Bodies, may very much influence that of the Mind, so near a Neighbour or In-mate, as that by this means a Man may be more exalted at one time in Faith or Trust, and anon depressed, like the bright gleaming Sun on a sudden darken'd with the passing by but of a Cloud, which it self, by its own brightness, heat, and lustre, has raised; yet know, that the Sun, even then when to us so obscured,

obscured, is in it self as clear as ever, and appears so too in the Eye of Heaven: And will God Judge of Men chiefly by their Intervals, or more general courses? Though by spinning and running Divinity into too fine and small a thread, it may break and fly in your Face: By overmuch righteousness Men may raise such a Spirit in them, as they are not able presently to lay again, till it sink like froth, and go down: Not but that our Faith may stand firmer upon a *Basis* of Humility, a Foundation so low laid for us to build our selves upon in our most Holy Faith; than on an exalted, towering, proud Conceit, an unwarrantable, aspiring, groundless certainty.

Faith may be lively and operative, and yet work as by Filial Fear and Reverence, even as knowing on whom we have believed; it may be sure and stedfast in Christ Jesus our Lord, as an Anchor on a Rock, the Rock of Ages; and yet Men may still go from Faith to Faith, one degree to another, till they attain the end thereof, the Salvation of their Souls, their Faith saving them, having its Fruit unto Holiness, (as a Living Faith will as genuinely put forth, as a living Tree, and can no more be separated from Good Works, than Heat from Fire, or Light from the Sun,) it has the End, everlasting Life.

And Faith is the very Eye of the Soul, more piercing than that of an Eagle, even to the beholding him that is invisible, or as it were seeing God in a Spiritual Vision; making things to come, as present, so strengthening us to resist Temptation, over-coming the World, keeping down otherwise the most prevailing Fears that tyrannize over Men's Minds and Consciences: This gives

boldneſs and aſſurance to the making Men great in diſtreſs, quieting, when they are apt otherwiſe to be tempeſtuous; appropriating God as our God, and will not ſuffer us to be overcome of Evil, but will overcome Evil with Good.

Faith high built is ſo more than equal a match, fit to combate it.

Though a Faithleſs Man is not ſo well able to encounter little Fears, or the beginnings of Sorrow, his Heart not ſtanding faſt, is afraid of Evil tidings; and if once we come to our Faith's end, what ſhall keep us from our Wits end?

Indeed a grain of Faith may ſeaſon a Man, that has not all; but a mountainous one will cover and hide him; or if to fight the good fight of Faith, it has the riſing ground, ſetting him upon the Rock that is higher than he. Is there an Inheritance by the Saints in Light to be poſſeſſed? Do not Men hold it by this Tenure; though to the World it be an unknown Land? If the Bleſſing of *Abraham* light upon us, we ſhall Heir and Inherit, tho' we have not to ſet our Foot; *we ſhall receive, if we faint not*; for Faith will, through the Promiſe, make us to look upon our ſelves as Heirs apparent to Heaven, *Joint-heirs with Chriſt, Co-heirs with him, who is gone to prepare a place for us, if not prepared from the beginning of the World*: So that there is eminent Wiſdom in Faith, as well as Nobleneſs of Spirit to contemn Earthly Glory, to live upon things inviſible, ſecured by God's faithfulneſs: However Carnal Men may look upon an Eſtate or Intereſt, lying in the Covenant or Promiſe, to be but a Notion or meer empty Conceit; but whether their Portion (which is God himſelf,) whether this hidden *Manna* doth appear ſo as to be diſcerned

cerned by any but a Spiritual diſcerning or not: They have Meat and Drink that the World knows not of then, who are Followers of themthat through Faith and Patience inherit the Promiſe for ever: And though the Heart be deceitful; yet is not he that doth righteouſneſs, righteous? Do Men gather generous Grapes on Thorns, or Figs on Thiſtles? And in this is your Heavenly Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit; wherefore ſhew me thy Faith by thy Works; but take heed of being barren and unfruitful in theſe, leaſt like the Fig-tree, being found fruitleſs, thou be near a Curſe.

And what if our Heart condemn us for our Failings and Errors of Life? God is greater than our Heart, to obliterate Sin, if we have the Apoſtle's truſt; that, of a Good Conſcience, in all things willing to live honeſtly; if *Job* can but hold faſt his Integrity: Who is bold, and he is not bold alſo? Not but that a ſuſpicious Heart may, if not watched, falſly accuſe the Brethren, as a deluded Mind, a depraved Judgment, an Underſtanding darken'd, Reaſon clouded through Debauch, may ſpeak Peace, where there is no Peace, ſaith my God: As the Wicked Man's Heart may be petrefied or benumb'd, the Conſcience ſeared as with an hot Iron, as though till almoſt paſt feeling. Wherefore, though God may wink at Men's Ignorance, where it is not affected; yet how fatal or dangerous may a miſtake be, in matters of Conſcience, and Error of Judgment! If not even to the making Shipwrack almoſt of timorous Men's Faith, and brawny Men's Conſciences; while the Heart may be ſo deſperately Wicked, and Men not ſo much carefully mind, and heed-

fully regard it: And ſo again very good, and yet not ſo joyfully be perceived, where the Faculties of Men are dull, and the Eye of their Soul blinded or indiſpoſed and ill-affected, like the Icterical one of the Body, that repreſents all things ſo as one thing, as to ſhew them as though partaking of one and the ſame colour.

But righteouſneſs will bring a Man Peace at the laſt; it ſhall as ſurely be well with the Righteous, as ill with the Wicked; if he do neither truſt to his own Righteouſneſs, nor diſtruſt God's Mercy, ſo as to ruine himſelf; thus Judging himſelf unworthy of Eternal Life.

But though this may be a Man's miſcarrying, it is not his preſumption that can be his ſafety; for God will not mete out Salvation unto Men, as they have more or leſs wildly believed, groundleſsly hoped, and unreaſonably expected; ſuch are to be perſwaded by the Terrors of the Lord, till frighted into the Terrors of their own Heart, that are ſo ſanguine as to flatter themſelves in their abominable Sin, and will ſpare themſelves in the things pertaining unto God, ſtroaking their Sin with a gentle cenſure, as if others were more in fault for taking notice of it to them, than they for ſpeaking or acting it; as if they might allow themſelves in a ſecret approbation to ſome Sins; as if allowed Affections to the leaſt Sin was not ſo deadly; as though Men needed not to be ſo ſollicitous to be eſtabliſhed in the Law, with a full purpoſe of Heart to cleave ſtedfaſtly unto the Lord always, to reſign themſelves up wholly to the Obedience of Chriſt, to be directed and guided evermore by the Holy Commandment, as if they thought of ſerving two Maſters, *Chriſt* and *Belial*.

Now

Now if you plead for any Sin, or excuſe it to your ſelf, ſo betraying the leaſt Good-Will towards it, take heed this be not ſo much enmity towards God. And then what wonder if it weaken your Confidence, and lay waſte your Hope? For be you well aſſured, if the Heart be Ulcerous, and full of putrefying Sores; yea, if a Man ſetting up the Trade of Sin, deal but by retail, not in the Groſs, though he act it by a cleanly Conveyance, or but ſlur it upon his own Conſcience half aſleep; or if that broad-awake-turning and looking ſtedfaſtly on, does not ſo amaze as to look the Man half dead, but is flattered or threatened into any baſe compliance, or bribed high to hold its Peace; yet though the Mind and Conſcience may ſometimes ſeem to be in good Humour, eaſie to be entreated, free and complaiſant; not ſo ſtern as to fright Men from attempting to ask any extraordinary thing of them; or if they do, not ſo ſeverely graced as to deny them any requeſt, even to the half of their Salvation,. could it be divided: If a Man's Heart is ſo weak in the reſolve of what is Good, its reſolution ſo variable, its inclination to evil, ſo ſtrong, as to keep up its Intereſt, (and with that the Devils,) though but ſecretly lurking in one corner of the Heart; if the Man hide it and ſhelter it, and welcome it under the ſafety of his roof; if it be there allowed, though never ſo cloſely, never ſo ſpeciouſly; or though wittily maintained, ſecurely cloak'd, or gorgeouſly arrayed, ſo as to appear creditable when ſeen abroad; though never ſo well ſlick'd and ſmooth'd, or ſo finely woven, that it might be a becoming Garb; though curiouſly wrought all over with Gold, or rather but waſh'd and gilded; though artificially knit together,

gether, that it is ſcarce to be perceived where it is deceitfully tack'd to Vertue it ſelf, as though of the ſame piece with it, though it be never ſo common, never ſo faſhionable; yet what confidence ſoever this Man arrogates, and preſumptuouſly takes to himſelf, Is not his Hope a Spider's Web? The Hypocrite's Hope that ſhall periſh? My Son give me thy Heart; if the Heart be not clean, who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Weigh but ſuch a Spirit in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and how mightily wanting! How deceitful upon the Weights! If not lighter than Vanity it ſelf: What Scriptural Confidence to deceitful Men? (though cheating themſelves moſt in the end.) *Micah* 2. 7. *O thou that art named the Houſe of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord ſtraitned? Are theſe his doings? Do not my Words do good to them that walk uprightly? The way of the Lord is ſtrength to ſuch, and their Prayer his delight.* Men loſe that Holy Familiarity and Cheerfulneſs, when with an unſound Heart they draw nigh unto God with their Lips; ſuch, through the conſciouſneſs of their own Guilt and Hypocriſie, grow ſhy of the Majeſty of Heaven, as inſincerity will cauſe us to be, when the Heart ſtands aloof from God, and has no pleaſure in his Society, for indeed what Communion?

But the ſounder the Heart, the more ſenſible of its weakneſs and Imperfections, the more ſuſpicious of its own deceiveableneſs, the more grieved at any ill bent, or working, as *Satan* ſifts all, as though he would even force ſome good Grain through with the Chaff; yea, I had almoſt ſaid as they; *But then loe I ſhould have condemned the Generation of thy Children*, ſays the Man after God's own

own Heart: And is it not even thus with many; namely, as if becauſe ſcarcely are the righteous ſaved; ſcarcely would the Righteous be perſwaded into the belief of their own ſafety? As though the Promiſes of Life and Salvation in the Goſpel made known unto Men, notwithſtanding ſo ample, and not ſtraitned in themſelves, were to be ſtraitned in our own Bowels of Mercies: How earneſtly do ſome contend for the true Faith! How ſorely ſome may ſtrive, and run, and wreſtle, and endure grief wrongfully! How they may be ſeen to work, and fear, and hope, and doubt, and tremble! As if they had again received the Spirit of Bondage, to fear ſlaviſhly; rather than the Spirit of Adoption, *whereby we cry, Abba Father*; or, as if they had already received the Sentence of Death in themſelves; as if God was not able to finiſh any Good Work begun in them, and to preſerve them to his Everlaſting Kingdom, to keep them from the Evil World, or deliver them out of the very pounces of *Satan* ready to carry them Captive; but would let them be tempted above their ſtrength, and not afford his Grace ſufficient for them; but leave them to themſelves to ſtand or fall, and when their Foot at any time ſlipp'd, would not grant his Mercy to hold them up in the way they ſhould go, but if at any time down, would ſuffer them there to lie, and to be left alone, unprofitably bemoaning themſelves to cry, *Wretched Man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this Body of Sin, and of Death?*

Whereas, though our Failings and often Infirmities ſhould humble us; yet not pull down the Strong-hold of Faith about us, to bury us alive in the ruines of it; but though our Fleſh and Heart fail,

fail, God should be the strength of our Heart while our Soul is disquieted within; for if our Heart be whole with God, the Blood of Christ cleanseth us from all Sin, in whom we may have access with boldness; if our Heart be purged from dead Works to serve the Living God, if purified by Faith, if the Will be rightly disposed, and the Affections quicken'd in the right way, if we are of obedient Ears, if hearing the Word we suffer it to run and be glorified, let it sink deep into our Heart, suffer it to take root down-ward, and bring forth Fruit, thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold; if, diffusing it self through every part, (like wholesome bodily Food well digested for the nourishment of the whole Man) it so insinuate as to influence and season every Affection, bring our Thoughts and Determinations into subjection, and to the Obedience of Christ, bearing an Universal Sovereignty over us; if we believe and confess, living up to our Rule of Faith; if so, then the Commandment being a Lamp, and the Law Light, *Prov.* 6. 22, 23. *When thou goest, it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee.*

Joy

Joy in the Holy Ghoſt.

GReat Peace is to ſuch as Love God's Law, whether any thing offend them or not; nor can any take away ſuch rejoycing as is to be found in the favour of God, filling with that Eternal Comforter that came from Heaven, which is pure and peaceable, the very Spirit of Joy, who may eminently be called the Comforter; as God may be ſaid the God of all Conſolation, Chriſt the Prince of Peace, the Goſpel the Goſpel of Peace, or as it ſignifies glad Tidings, which is to be great Joy to all believing People at the leaſt: And though there may be bitter envyings of accurſed Spirits, and grieving at our Joy in the Holy Ghoſt; yet we may be much greater Hinderers of it our ſelves; notwithſtanding the beſt condition in this Life, where God ſpeaks not Peace, be ſo miſerable and uncomfortable, the Creature being but as a broken Ciſtern, that can hold no Waters of Comfort, or as an empty Conduit Pipe, if the Divine Conſolation flows not in by it to refreſh; and then if the greateſt Worldly Good availeth ſo little; nay, be ſo wearisome and uneaſie: What are the greateſt Evils, when Men are fed only with Bread of Adverſity, and Water of Affliction only is given them to drink? Some may think in vain to be feaſted with Privileges, if they have ſuch tender parts of their Soul, as will not endure to be ſearched or touch'd

touch'd upon by the Word; for it ſtirring up their Fears, reviving their Doubts, as being contrary to their Luſts, they love it not, do not receive the Truth together with a love of it; *for every one that doth Evil, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, leaſt his Deeds (of Darkneſs) ſhould be reproved.*

Others there may be, whoſe weakneſs of Faith is not ſeconded with Natural Courage; perhaps there are, who at certain critical, dark and nice points of Time, are ready to ſuſpect their own ſincerity: almoſt half overcome and perſwaded to join with *Satan* in his evil ſuggeſtion, to ſtrengthen themſelves in the Opinion of their own unbelief, ſo damping and ſtifling their Joy; who yet, if at other times they were charged ſtiffly by others of Hypocriſie and a formal Heart, would think they had reaſon ſtoutly to maintain their uprightneſs and integrity, though they died.

Thus a Man may ſometimes carefully and anxiouſly, with great perplexity of Mind, look for what he has in his Hand; may fear he has loſt, what he holds very faſt and ſecure, as a thing mightily prized by him.

Now it is a ſign we love that moſt, which we grieve moſt for the loſs, or decay, or abſence of: But muſt not the Juſt Live by Faith, ſometimes of his very Faithfulneſs? For is Faith an Evidence to Senſe ſo clearly always? A Mathematical demonſtration is evident enough in it ſelf; but not to a Country Swain: And if we againſt ſufficient aſſurance go to ſtart Doubts, one may beget another, and we may be almoſt loſt and bewildred, or run round in a Circle till giddyed and ſick, whenas we may ſometimes hold faſt a concluſion, though

unable

unable to anſwer every Objection. Thus ſaith the Prophet, *Righteous art thou, O Lord; yet let me treat with thee of thy Judgments*, why is it ſo and ſo? And if we do not hold the Concluſion where ſure, (I ſpeak not againſt giving a Reaſon of the Hope that is in us, or to promote a too eaſie Credulity) ſometimes Errour may creep and ſteal in upon us, may ſeem to argue ſo fairly, and appear ſo clearly, or at leaſt ſo probably repreſented, as ſtrongly to affect; and Errour to Men in Errour, looks like Truth to Men in the Truth.

And it is not in our power, if to ſtint, to avoid all Temptations of the evil one. And perhaps oftentimes a ſtronger Faith may be ready to be ſhaken with what ſome of leſs Faith are utter ſtrangers to, and perfectly unacquainted with; and Faith may be ſtronger in one thing poſſibly, or at one time than another; and yet I dare not ſay neceſſarily therefore comes under a Scriptural wavering. In the hour of Darkneſs, when that is charging upon Men, bleſſed are they that have not ſo clearly ſeen, and yet have believed. Some are naturally bold, and reſolute, and cheerful; but let us diſtinguiſh between Nature and Grace, Diſpoſition, and Vertue by Conqueſt; Were the Diſciples ſo only when they rejoyced in Tribulation; or Diſciples too in the midſt of their natural Fears?

Miſtake not Paſſion another while for what it is not; Affections of Joy and Fear may be in themſelves ſenſitive, ſo as to taſte very much of the Cask.

A cheerful Man may with a grain of Faith ſhew more and greater Expreſſions of outward Joy (if I may ſo ſpeak) than a Mountain of it meeting with

with a contrary Temper; that if it but fear that Glory departing, or leſſen'd in the inner Man, is ready to cry out with holy *David*, *O give me the comfort of thy help again, and ſtabliſh me with thy free Spirit*; which will no more refuſe to ſit with a Man in the duſt, than to aſcend the Throne with him that fills it; yet being an holy Spirit (not but that it is alſo an eternal and omnipotent Spirit, *&c.* but may ſeem chiefly to be delighted with the Epithete *Holy*,) it will be chaſed away with filthy pollution; being the Spirit of Love and Peace: It will not dwell with Envying, Malice, Wrath and ſuch like: And *if any Man have not the Spirit of Chriſt*, (and what manner an one he was of, you know very well) *he is none of his*, and if there be not the firſt Principles of renewed Life in the Soul, but that be utterly corrupted, altogether become abominable, how can we think that that Wind, though it blows where it liſts, will blow as upon a dead Coal, that will not be enliven'd? God does not uſually force the nature of ſecond Cauſes; it is pleaſing to him, that men deſire him, to ſtabliſh the thing wrought in them; and *to him that hath, ſhall be given*, that the growth of Grace may not be at a ſtand, but put forth always in a blooming Spring, or full blown: and yet, as in ſome pleaſant Countries, always with ripe Fruit. And *in this is your heavenly Father glorified, that you bear much Fruit.* And do we not read of the Spirit's being not yet given, becauſe Chriſt was not then as yet glorified? And this may be one main Reaſon ſtill of the Holy Ghoſt's not being given in ſuch large Meaſures, God being no more glorified of Men, who ſhall never glorifie him in Heaven, that do refuſe firſt to do it here

on

on Earth. Is it not a good Argument that Christ urges in Prayer for Glorification? *John* 17. 4,5. *I have glorified thee on the Earth, I have finished the Work which thou gavest me to do; And now, O Father, glorifie me with thine own self, with the Glory which I had with thee before the World was.*

And there may be some that live joyfully, divinely solacing themselves, as though they were already set down in heavenly Places, as it were, taking up so much of their rest here, being as dead to the World, but alive only unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; or whether they otherwise do live, they live unto the Lord, desiring nothing while here in comparison of him, as well as no other in Heaven hereafter. And thus may Men also receive for the loss of Houses and Lands, *&c.* an hundred fold in this Life, though they come to their Estates no more, God having provided some better thing for them: But this may be so rare and particular, as that others may want a more universal Note of the Grace of God's Holy Spirit, which may also amount to a sufficient Evidence; wherefore reflecting upon your own Soul, do you find Christ formed there in you? Is the Image of Christ there lively represented to you in a Frame of true Holiness? For to Believers at least, is not such Testimony substantial Evidence? though there be no such glorious Pretences to every manifestation of the Spirit? For is there but one demonstration thereof; or but one Operation of it? Is it not the self-same Spirit that distributes to every man severally as he will? Is it not the same Spirit that conveighs Grace into the Soul, the same which plants, and waters when planted;

that it might yield the greater encreaſe? Is it not the ſame Spirit that helps Men's Infirmities, which alſo cauſes ſome to exult for joy, a joy running over, filling with ſuch Meat and Drink as the world knows not of?

Even the Apoſtles themſelves, might, with all their Tongues, want Words expreſſive enough to utter their Mind fully with due Accent and Emphaſis, ſo as to give another a Taſte of what they felt; as though they lived here by Senſe, and not Faith only, ſo rejoycing in God's holy Comfort; and if others ſay, ſhew us that we have the Holy Spirit, and it ſuffices us; as *Philip* once ſaid to Chriſt concerning the Father; who was anſwerd, *Have I been ſo long time with you, and haſt thou not known me, Philip? He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father; and from henceforth you know him, and have ſeen him:* So ſay I to ſuch Requirers; Have ye been baptized in his holy Name, ſanctified through him; have ye believed in him, (and why ſhould you doubt but unto Salvation too?) Have ye cheriſhed his good Motions, and been grieved, been in bitterneſs, when ye feared he was offended, and humbly ſought his Favour or Reconciliation with your whole heart? And yet ſay ye, ſhew us that we have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us? The Kingdom of God may be in you, and yet you may ſuffer Temptation and Buffeting of Satan.

When Chriſt once breathed on his Diſciples, and ſaid, *Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt*; was not that a mild and gentle way of giving it, as might ſcarce be perceived, ſo as by the bodily ſenſe of feeling? Yet what was beſtowed and given in ſuch ſoft Methods,

thods, might be as really effectual to their Souls, as though it had proceeded forth in a ſtiff Gale, or a mighty ruſhing Wind.

Is it the violently ruſhing and ſtormy Rain only that repleniſhes the Earth, and makes it ſo fruitful as to laugh and ſing; or Rain deſcending alſo as the Dew of Heaven into a Fleece of Wool? God was in time paſt (as you may read) in the ſtill ſmall voice, as well as afterward in the mighty ruſhing Wind that bloweth where it liſteth.

And what if the Whiſpers are ſo ſoft, as that the more dull of hearing, perceive no ſuch ſound in their ears, as *This is the right way, walk ye in it*; or as it were, a Voice declaring from above, *I am the Lord your God, fear not, I am with you, and will bring you to Honour*? May not our Cloudineſs intercept the Voice, or the ſtormy Thunder in our own timorous Breaſts, drown and ſtifle it?

The Breath is the Life of Man ſo far, as that when it ceaſes, we turn to our Duſt; yet do we not live as well when we hear not our ſelves breath, as when we diſturb our ſelves with the noiſe of it? And yet Fear may poſſeſs us ſometimes of another's being dead, becauſe he makes no noiſe of Life in that kind.

The leaſt Gale of Wind may be of the ſame kind with the more wreſtling and impetuous. And as the Wind ſometimes ariſes ſuddenly; ſo may a Storm in any, without the gathering together of abundance of black Clouds imbodyed: And though a ſtormy Wind may be nothing elſe but a little thin empty Air moved, tending one certain way; yet it may ſo wreſtle as to throw down almoſt all before it, even the very Temples of

God may not have ſtrength enough to withſtand it, unſhatter'd; when it rages and beats ſo vehemently, an high well built Faith may be ſtruck at, as if intended it ſhould be caſt down, though built on a Rock. A rich and well laden Ship may be toſſed at Sea, as well as an empty one, and the fullneſs of it, though very precious ſubſtance, may farther threaten the Loſs, than of what is Lighter, more complying and yielding to the determination of the Winds and Waves, point and drive they which way they will.

And thus huge Piles of Building may be rock'd, and the talleſt Cedars ſuffer many a ſhock; though when were the Winds ever ſo outrageous againſt theſe things, as the Devil to vex with all his Storms, even thoſe whoſe Hope has reaſon to be full of Immortality?

Thus you may have ſeen the moſt innocently fair, bright, and glorious Day, weep, when looking up for the Cloud cauſing it, no reaſon for it has appeared, but the Heavens have been clear, as though it was the Sun or Firmament melted down.

A Man may be competently filled with the *Good Things of this Life*, with ſome of the moſt delicious, rare, and dainty Meat; and yet find no more alteration in himſelf poſſibly after ſuch moderate repletion, than if ſatiated with the courſeſt Fare.

A Tree that bears no Fruit, may look as ſplendidly gay and glorious, as if it did bear hidden Fruit covered with the Leaves; but by the Fruit you muſt diſtinguiſh Trees: And is not every one ſo to be diſtinguiſhed and known that is born of the Spirit? Though God may have given of his Holy Spirit,

Spirit, where the Joy unſpeakable may not pre-preſently ſo flow.

Thus the Sun may influence Plants and Flowers, that Day it was mask'd and veil'd, never ſhining out bright upon them; though that's ſhining might have more refreſhed them, and made them more ſprightly.

The Moon may (as we read concerning it) put forth precious things in the moſt cloudy thick Night; though it is not ſo, every time a Miſt or Cloud intercepts the Light of the Sun.

How many going Hand in Hand with the Commandment, taking the Spirit of God for their Guide to lead them in the way they ſhould go, have great Peace, and yet not cocker'd Children neither?

And thus (though the Fruit of the Spirit be one thing, and the exceeding Joy another) perhaps it ſhould be with all coming under its Guidance and Protection; were it not for their own weakneſs and infirmity, or ſlight Spirit, their own fault, if I may call it ſo, in ſome of the beſt of Holy Men and Women; as ſometime *who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's Servant?* Iſa. 42. 19. Or it may be in Mercy to them for their farther tryal and encreaſe of Grace, in order to the like degree of Glory.

God many times may not do what is moſt pleaſing to us in Spirituals, but what is moſt for our Advantage, our Eternal Good and Welfare; o-

therwiſe

therwiſe, why do you think he withdraws his Joyful Preſence from any Saint upon Earth? Or, why gives he it ſo by meaſure, as he does to many, and not always ſhines vigorouſly into their Hearts, the moſt ſecret receſſes of it? Is it, think you, becauſe he is unwilling to impart it unto them in a fuller and higher degree; who, if asked, *how ſhall he not give the Holy Spirit to him that asketh?* Is God penurious of it towards the Children of Men? Would he not rather have them ask that they might receive? Shewing them the right way to obtain it, how to be qualified to receive it: How can we then think he would hereafter ſo reveal himſelf unto glorified Saints in Heaven, (where the Mightineſs of his Kingdom is made known unto Men,) as to fill every Soul to the utmoſt capacity, with his own Glory that he has with him from the Beginning, if he in himſelf conſidered, was the alone cauſe of its being ſo ſtinted here? Were we fit now to receive this Joy in God, and were we ſure not to be puffed up with it, or grow more remiſs and careleſs by it, or ſome way or other turn it to our own hurt: Who can ſay but that God would divide a great Portion to us of it, would it not ſuffer the abuſe by us of the Prodigal's, when in his own Hands; namely, be wantoned with, and make us to cauſe our Heavenly Father not ſo often to hear from us? Or elſe God may hide his Face from Men here, for the puniſhment of thoſe Sins he will not mention to them hereafter; though, is not that comparatively a ſlender puniſhment that only forbears to enliven and rejoyce us, inſtead of grievouſly and ſorely afflicting us with his heavy Hand? For if the ſpeaking a Word againſt the

the Holy Ghoſt be deſervedly puniſhed with God's Abſence and Wrath taking Vengeance for ever, Of how ſore puniſhment may it be thought worthy, to do many ſuch things as continue to grieve him? Whom to be perfectly agreeable to in all things, (whether we bring forth that exceeding Joy, or conceive it in us or not,) bearing the genuine Fruits thereof in whole Cluſters, is to be full ripe for Heaven.

F I N I S.